



Consultation on OFMDFM TBUC Summer Camps

Young people's views on the proposed TBUC Summer Camps

NIYF was asked to consult with young people in relation to the 100 proposed summer camps for young people as part of the Together: Building a United Community strategy in summer 2015.

Throughout November and December 2014, NIYF carried out a number of consultations with young people aged 11-25 from various locations across Northern Ireland. These consultations utilised a variety of methods including interactive activities, large/small group discussions, written feedback and questionnaires in consulting with young people to obtain their views on the proposed summer camps, which have been compiled in this document. NIYF welcomes the fact that OFMDFM have sought to consult with young people on the summer camps and hopes that going forward, the views expressed by the young people in this consultation will shape the TBUC Summer Camps in 2015.

In total, 40 young people participated in the consultation process, 14 of which were male, 21 were female and 5 chose not to specify their gender. Of the 40 overall participants, 9 were under the age of 16, 22 were aged 16-18 and 9 were aged 19-21. Alongside their gender and age, the young people consulted were also given the opportunity to include where they lived as part of the consultation, the responses to which were:

Carrick Hill	Carrickfergus
West Belfast	Newtownabbey
Coalisland	Lisburn
Tyrone	Bangor
Newry	Newcastle
Divis	Ligoneil
Shankill	East Belfast
South Belfast	Co. Londonderry
Craigavon	Portaferry
North Belfast	Coleraine
Glengormley	Strabane
Cavehill	Portadown

The feedback provided in this response will, as far as possible be under the five themes identified by OFMDFM;

1. Good Relations
2. Pre and Post Engagement
3. Who Should Attend
4. Skills, Training and Qualifications for Summer School/Camp Deliverers
5. Other

1. Good Relations

Many of the young people felt that making sure all areas were targeted in recruitment for the summer camps would be important in ensuring that good relations was an integral part of the camps as this would allow for a broad range of participants from diverse backgrounds to attend and as such, provide a better environment for exploring good relations. They also felt it was important that prior to attending the camps, the participants were made aware of the importance of respecting and showing understanding towards others and their views, as they felt that only then would people feel comfortable to discuss and engage in good relations work on the camps.

Alongside participants being prepared to show respect and understanding for others prior to the summer camps, many of the young people were of the view that the whole concept of good relations should be explored with the participants beforehand, with this work then being developed further at the residential.

The focus group participants felt that the preparation sessions should address issues such as sectarianism, culture, diversity, respect, rights vs responsibilities, 'post conflict' and 'peace process.'. As they are complex issues, the young people felt that they should be dealt with differently in relation to the predefined age ranges. Those in the lower age range should look at these issues abstractly, whereas the older age band should look at the specific workings of intolerance, conflict, bias etc.

In relation to the good relations programme that would be delivered on the summer camps, some of the older focus group participants felt that this would need to vary depending on the age of the young people on the camps, with a different programme being necessary for the 11-14 year old participants than that for the 15-19 year olds. As such, they felt that the programme for the 15-19 year olds should:

- Expose young people to wider world affairs (eg. global poverty)
- Explore why sectarianism is more rife within certain communities, but not in the workplace. A suggestion was to bring in guest speakers from the business community, such as a potential employer to explore this.
- Give the young people accredited training.
- Include giving the young people a goal-orientated task to achieve collectively, the nature of which should be decided upon by the young people.
- Have a good balance between "fun and activities"
- Include guest speakers and physically challenging team building activities (but not at the cost of excluding people)

Other focus group participants and online respondents thought that the good relations programme should include cultural workshops (eg. different music and food), guest speakers (such as someone who served time in jail through "The Troubles"), team-building, working together, activities, art, drama and films/documentaries. It was noted that how this good relations programme was delivered would be key, as some young people felt it could "run the risk of being patronising or condescending."

Challenge For Youth was cited by a number of young people as being a good practice example of how good relations can be an integral part of a summer camp.

2. Pre and Post Engagement

In relation to the involvement of parents/guardians, some young people thought parents and guardians could help out at the summer camps, while others were firm in their belief that they shouldn't be helping on the camps- they felt that young people wouldn't want them there and also that parents/guardians would want a break while the young people were on the camps.

Whilst the opinion was varied on whether or not parents/guardians should have direct involvement with the actual summer camps, there was largely a consensus among the focus group participants that it would be important that parents/guardians were well informed about the camps, particularly due to the good relations focus of the camps. Some of the participants had been on a residential with NIYF last year; 'NIYFest' and they felt that a pack similar to what their parents/guardians received for this residential would be ideal for the summer camps. This pack would include consent forms, staff contact details, details of the accommodation (if the camp was being run on a residential basis) and information about the camp, its aims, the programme and other attendees.

One suggestion made which many of the participants were in favour of was that there would be the capacity for older young people to receive training prior to the summer camps so that they could work/volunteer on them in a 'peer leader' capacity. They felt that not only would this be beneficial for those young people who would be peer leaders, but it would also enhance the summer camp experience for the young people who were participating in them.

In relation to the engagement prior to the summer camps, alongside participating in a preparatory good relations programme, many of the focus group participants felt that the young people should also have opportunities to meet with other young people from different areas/traditions/backgrounds beforehand to reduce the likelihood of this being an issue during the camps.

The young people expressed varying views on the best way to facilitate a network of continued communication following the summer camps, with some thinking that the main point of on-going contact with each other would be via social media, while others felt that social media was relied on too heavily. Another suggestion was that the summer camp facilitators should encourage on-going contact via facilitating/encouraging youth led campaigns and fun activities. One question raised was how the post-engagement activities would be funded.

One of the focus groups discussed how each of the summer camps were likely to be happening autonomously and that if they were a participant on one, they were unlikely to know people from, or know anything about the other summer camps that took place and as such, any post-engagement should only be with the participants of each camp as opposed to bringing participants of all 100 summer camps together.

3. Who Should Attend

Feedback from one focus group highlighted that whilst the young people recognise that some communities experience heightened tension at certain times of the year, they were of the view that no special arrangements should be made for these areas. They thought that young people from a range of areas, including those that experience heightened tension, should be engaged with before these “hotspots” arise and they are encouraged to undertake their summer camp experience during these “hotspots”. The young people thought that many of their peers who live outside interface areas or who don’t reside in close proximity to them, have a lot to offer their peers who do, by way of their own unique experiences and should therefore not be excluded from any resource allocation.

Other focus groups were more divided on their views on whether participants should be targeted, with some stressing that it should be open to all young people as good relations is relevant to everyone and that it wouldn’t be fair to target certain young people, at the expense of “good young people” or those who didn’t live in interface areas/ weren’t from certain backgrounds etc. On the other hand, some focus group participants suggested that areas with limited youth facilities, interface areas and young people who had been involved with the police should be targeted.

Of those who completed the online questionnaire, 79% felt that the summer camps shouldn’t be targeted and should be open to everyone. 3% chose not to answer this question and 17% thought that it should be targeted, citing young people who are socially disadvantaged, from outside of Belfast, from different religious/cultural backgrounds, from interface areas and from ethnic minorities as those groups who they felt should be targeted for attendance on the summer camps.

In relation to the question of how the young people could be identified, the participants felt this was a difficult question to answer as they could only speak for themselves. They suggested that since many young people communicate with each other via social media and that this is often generically, then any young person has the potential to influence how another young person thinks about others within society. Therefore, engaging with ‘young people’ and getting their views/input as to how the summer camp should be organised should be the priority not a specific ‘type’ of young person or young person from a specific area. They suggested that local youth providers/community workers within communities should be a starting point for recruitment, regional youth organisations can also be a useful mechanism and some church based groups should also be approached.

The young people were largely in agreement that the summer camps needed to be well advertised so that the largest possible amount of young people know about them and have the opportunity to participate in them.

4. Skills, Training and Qualifications for Summer School/Camp Deliverers

The young people were very clear that those involved in the delivery of the programme need to be highly experienced in delivering services to young people. They should have experience in delivering residential and delivering programmes to a diverse range of young people, they should be access N.I. checked, all should be trained in health and safety and they should have a specific interest in developing a good relations strategy. The young people suggested that NIYF would be in a good position to deliver the programme, as would some of the local youth providers within local communities and some of the church based organisations.

Particular desirable skills of those facilitating the camps were also highlighted in the focus group, which included having good communication skills, being good at giving advice, being a good listener and being fun to be around.

Participants also discussed the types of people/organisations who they felt would be best placed to facilitate the summer camps, with some expressing the opinion that they didn't think it should be schools/teachers as they felt it should be more informal. Amongst those who completed the online questionnaire;

86% thought it should be youth workers/clubs/organisations

43% thought it should be community workers/groups/organisations

21% thought it should be churches/church groups

7% thought it should be teachers/schools

And 14% chose 'Other' (the majority of those who chose 'Other', when asked to comment with their suggestion(s) stated 'Challenge For Youth')

As mentioned previously, one of the focus groups thought that there should be the capacity for young people who are interested to receive training so that they could work alongside the staff/organisations to help facilitate the summer camps.

5. Other

-What are the key challenges for providers in implementing the Summer Schools/ Camps Programme?

The young people felt that some of the main challenges for providers in delivering the summer camps may be in recruiting young people from a diverse range of backgrounds, behaviour difficulties, keeping the young people interested, maintaining commitment, avoiding tokenism and ensuring that there are follow-up activities.

-What range of activities would you like to see offered in the schools/camps?

Alongside the activities mentioned previously in relation to the good relations programme, young people suggested the following as additional activities they would like to see offered as part of the summer camps:

- Outdoor activities (canoeing, kayaking, hiking, boat building, bouldering, mountain biking, archery etc.)
- Banana boating
- Camp fires
- Foreign trips
- Beach trips
- Camping
- Cooking together
- Team building activities/workshops
- Activities that challenge young people to go out of their comfort zones
- Roleplays
- Drama
- Games
- Arts
- Disco
- Paintballing
- Airsofting
- Butchery classes
- Skydiving
- Hunting
- High ropes
- Films

-Should there be a nominal charge for participants/attendees at the school/camp?

The vast majority of the participants thought that the residential should be free as a fee may discourage people from going and may exclude some young people who would have otherwise wanted to/benefited from attending, however some of them thought that participants should pay a £10 fee.

Online respondents were also somewhat divided in their opinions to this question, with 43% saying "yes" and 46% saying no. Of those who thought that there should/may need to be a charge, the amounts they suggested as being reasonable ranged from £8-£50.

-Other considerations/questions raised and other comments

Many of the young people felt that other important considerations for the summer camps would be the location, the duration, whether or not they would have to pay for travel, the quality of food, the starting time of sessions (not too early), if the programme allowed for a day of

relaxing/fun (no work-based sessions) and whether or not they are given clear information about the summer camp. In relation to the good relations nature of the camp, the young people highlighted that they didn't think it should be overly focused on sectarianism.

As part of the online consultation, young people were asked to comment on what would make them want to attend one of the summer camps, with the responses including:

- Fun
- Everything
- Meeting new people
- Previous positive experiences of camps
- The benefit they would get from it
- Friendly, "dead-on" and approachable staff
- Exciting activities
- Challenge
- To get away from the area
- Making new friends
- "Good looking lads lol"
- Meeting up with people from other areas
- Camping
- The range of activities available
- Meeting new people from different backgrounds
- "The opportunity to see why people have created a barrier between each other"
- It being worth your time

Similarly, they were then asked to comment on what would potentially stop them from wanting to attend one of the summer camps, with the responses including:

- Nothing
- Too expensive
- Staff who weren't enthusiastic or friendly
- Weather
- Having to do work all the time
- Strict rules
- It being religious based
- Lack of activities
- Too much focus on one topic (e.g. religion or sectarianism)
- Sectarianism/ it being one sided
- Groups being too good (not getting to know everyone)
- Bullies
- Not being able to smoke
- Single sex camps
- Not knowing about them
- Water activities
- No one else you know attending
- It being condescending/patronising