

An evaluation of the Together: Building a United Community Camps Programme (2019/20)

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1. Context

The Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) strategy, published on 23 May 2013, reflects the Executive's commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society. The T:BUC Camps programme (programme) was launched on 15 April 2015 as one of the headline actions of the T:BUC strategy. The programme requirements specify that the camps must be run on a cross-community basis and include participants from Catholic and Protestant communities. Participation is also encouraged from young people aged 11 to 19 years from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. A key feature of the programmes is that the programmes should focus on activities that are enjoyable and fun.

The ETI was commissioned by the Department of Education (DE) to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme against its outcomes, which are:

- positive attitudinal changes towards people from different backgrounds;
- sustained contact and friendships developed between young people from different backgrounds; and
- young people have a better understanding and respect for cultural differences.

The governance of the programme is overseen by a programme board which is chaired by the director of good relations and T:BUC Division, based in the Executive Office (TEO). The programme board membership includes representatives from The TEO, Education Authority (EA), DE, Belfast City Council, Community Relations Council and the community and voluntary sectors. The role of the programme board is to:

- oversee the design, development and operation of the programme;
- agree and monitor progress of the programme Action Plan;
- oversee the evaluation of the programme;
- oversee the design and delivery of the programme in the Community events; and
- report on progress/risks to the Good Relations Programme Board.

The EA has the overall responsibility for administering the programme including: allocation of funding; quality assurance; reporting; support and delivery; and operates within a memorandum of understanding between the DE, EA and TEO.

2. Focus of the Evaluation

The focus of the evaluation included an evaluation of:

- the positive attitudinal change by the young people towards others from different backgrounds;
- how sustained the contact and friendships were developed between young people from different backgrounds;

- if the young people have a better understanding and respect for cultural difference;
- if the camps demonstrated a substantive good relations element across the programmes;
- the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements within the sample camps visited;
- the use and analysis of data collated by the EA in the final report card; and
- the effectiveness of the governance arrangements in place for individual camps and for the programme based on the sample selected by the ETI.

3. Summary of key findings

The key findings from the ETI evaluation of the programme are summarised below.

Going Well

- Most of the young people understood why they were attending the programme and were able to articulate the key aims and vision of the programme. Almost all of the young people were observed engaging well with the variety of activities on offer.
- In the best practice, the energetic and enthusiastic staff use effective small group work to develop meaningful conversations with the young people. The planning matched the individual needs of each young person and reflected well the vision and aims of the programme. There was sensitive support provided for young people with additional needs.
- While the legacy of the troubles and dealing with religious difference is still a concern for a significant minority of young people, the majority interviewed stated that issues such as 'coping with life', 'dealing with bullying' and 'feeling isolated' were more important to them.
- A significant minority of the young people have experienced racism or discrimination, however, based on their experience of the programme, they report they have an enhanced sense of identity, and increased their confidence to challenge stereotyping behaviour from others. The discussions with young people provided evidence of positive attitudinal change among them, primarily towards others from different backgrounds and different cultures.
- The EA team provided very good resources and support; almost all of the programmes visited reported a more streamlined application process, and the increased support has improved the quality of the work of the staff and volunteers in the pre-camp, camp and post-camp phases.
- For those organisations who attended the good relations workshops there was an increased understanding of the aims and goals of the programme. A majority of the organisations reported that the good relations resource packs, and the training sessions provided by the EA were beneficial not only for the programme but also for delivering good youth work activities.

- The majority of the residential programmes visited involved young people in the planning of the programme; the young leaders and volunteers took responsibility during the activities, providing them with appropriate progression routes to leadership. It is important for the future development that the young people continue to be central to the planning, design and evaluation of the programmes.
- The social action projects and Ambassadors pilot programme are good examples of embedding learning from previous programmes, and involving young people in leadership roles beneficial to their community.

Going Forward

- There is a need for the EA to more systematically track all of the changes that occur between application stage and each programme event to include attendance, dates and venues, as well as re-profiling the budget, to improve monitoring, tracking and planning.
- Although the EA Outcomes Based Assessment (OBA) measures the percentage of young people who feel they will stay in touch post-camp, where possible, it would be advantageous to be able to collate data on how many of the 88.9%¹ of young people actually stayed connected after the programme ended and how much post-camp contact was achieved.
- There is a need for more quantitative evidence gathering, including better analysis of data to inform the planning of future programmes.
- The development of case studies to reflect the positive experiences of the young people should be promoted further to inform more effectively ongoing planning and development.

4. Outcomes for Young People

The engagement of the young people in almost all of the group work programmes, the general activities and in particular, the planning and management of their activities was very good. The young people enjoyed the variety of activities on offer and participated well in the group work programmes, where they spoke openly and honestly about some of the important issues they were facing as young people in today's society.

Feedback from young people and camp leaders contained in the EA programme evaluation report for 2019/20 includes, for example:

"I learned not to judge people by how they look or where they are from and that there can be more than one layer to some people" (young person), "I am filled with confidence that we have a better future for Northern Ireland after what I have seen from these young people tonight" (staff member).

In the majority of the groups visited by the ETI, the young people discussed how difference and being different affected them, in formal and informal youth work settings. While there were a variety of views, the young people from one group in particular objected to being stereotyped by many adults as Catholic Nationalist and Republican (CNR)/Protestant Unionist and Loyalist (PUL) /Looked after Children (LAC).

¹ Appendix B, EA evaluation report, is anyone better off?

"I am fed up with adults using stereotyping labels like LAC/PUL/CNR children, we are individuals and should be treated with more respect" (young person).

The young people responded well to formal group work discussions. When a safe environment is created, they demonstrated compassion and sensitivity towards the rights and feelings of others. In a minority of the sessions observed, the conditions necessary for meaningful discussions, such as having clear objectives for the session and well defined roles and responsibilities for the facilitators, were not present or underdeveloped. This was mainly due to the lack of confidence and limited experience of the staff and volunteers delivering the sessions.

"Despite being from different backgrounds we are all working together as part of the one family to make a difference, we know what it is like" (Polish, Somali and Northern Ireland young volunteers).

The residential experiences allowed the young people the space and time to explore cross-cultural dialogue; it provided a very effective way of supporting good relations. The staff and young people used the formal and informal time to build effective working relationships and shared life experiences from their different backgrounds and cultures.

"I am very grateful for the opportunities provided by T:BUC, it has given me the confidence to apply for a youth work post and now I am studying for a youth work qualification" (staff member).

Cultural differences emerged as a significant issue in a majority of the programmes that were attended by young people from ethnic minorities. Staff and a minority of the young people requested more awareness and delivery on this issue. In addition, further support and training on dealing with issues relating to social media and online activities was requested by staff.

Overall the evidence from the evaluation shows that the programme experience improved the emotional health and confidence of the young people. As a result of meeting new friends, many young people did not feel as isolated as they did before attending. While most of the young people still understand the positives and negatives to being perceived as a Catholic or Protestant by others, the main issue through observations and in discussions with the young people was about respect for oneself and others, irrespective of backgrounds or culture.

5. Quality of Provision

Almost all of the good relations sessions were pre-planned and appropriately themed. For example, there were good examples of prejudice awareness sessions that were facilitated well by the youth workers to create a safe environment for the young people to engage, leading to well-planned and developed discussions. However, the planning for each programme needs to recognise and take into account more fully the young people's interests and aspirations, as a minority of the young people feel this was sometimes overlooked.

In the most effective practice, the camp leaders and staff work hard to ensure that each person is valued for who they are, differences are appreciated, and everyone feels included and understood, irrespective of their personality, abilities, ethnic background or culture. Where the young people were fully involved in the planning there were better outcomes for the group.

In the less effective practice, a minority of the sessions were too long, the young people became tired and disengaged. The rooms were not conducive to good group work, and there were missed opportunities to extend the learning to give the young people more of a voice. There was an imbalance between the input from the facilitators and the input from the young people.

In the prejudice awareness sessions observed, the most effective practice was well facilitated by the professional youth workers. In these sessions, the effective plenaries addressed the feedback from the young people, and reaffirmed the learning from the sessions. In a small number of the sessions, the effective use of group work developed the young people's confidence to progress further their conversations around diversity and respect. The best practice observed included effective session planning, matched to the needs of the young people. Additionally, the facilitators had clearly defined roles and responsibilities and the young people had an understanding of the expected programme outcomes.

One of the key strengths of the programme was the very good examples of large group work which were effectively planned and managed. There were age appropriate and effective activities that enabled the young people to get to know one another and build positive, and in a small number of cases, lasting relationships.

In one session, the group were briefed well by the staff who then broke up the large group into smaller working groups. Each facilitator was clear about their roles and responsibilities and the safe conditions created by staff allowed for increased engagement between the young people which led to them being more aware of the inconsistencies in their own beliefs. The levels of engagement, openness and honesty demonstrated by the young people were of a high standard.

When small group work was facilitated by experienced and trained staff, the good relations outcomes planned for the programme were achieved. The majority of the groups visited were facilitated by staff who had limited training, going forward this needs further consideration by the programme board, to invest in further training and support for staff to assist them in developing the necessary skills and confidence to deliver effective community relations work.

The programme provides an excellent opportunity for most of the young people living in difficult circumstances to get away from their particular situation, including, in a minority of cases, provide important respite for young carers. Overall, the facilitation of the sessions was energetic and dynamic as a result of enthusiastic staff delivery and the active participation of young people. There was sensitive support observed for young people with additional needs for example, the trained and experienced staff were able to use patience, empathy and understanding to deal effectively with any situation that arose.

The majority of the programmes were achieving social harmony and actively promoting dialogue, understanding, and respect between the young people from different backgrounds. Over half of the groups visited had young people from Somalia, Sudan and East European countries.

In programmes with young people from minority ethnic communities, staff were observed purposefully using fun activities to encourage increased participation and making connections between the young people of mixed cultural backgrounds.

There were a few good examples of developing progression routes to leadership roles, and this needs to be built on further. The ETI spoke with a small number of young adults who described their journey from camp participant to young adult leader and the leadership skills they developed over many years. In the best practice, the staff were observed encouraging the young people to be reflective and encouraging the development of their leadership skills.

“...attending the camp as a young person and now as a volunteer has given me the courage to think for myself and not be influenced by what others are telling me about the other religion. I have been able to challenge the negative cultural and religious comments from my own family and open up a good debate and discussion between us... as a result of my T:BUC experience I am hoping to go on to study youth and community work at uni, the first in my family to go to uni” (young person)

6. Leadership and Management

Overall the management of the programme, and the support provided by the EA was very good. Almost all of the groups spoke positively about the effective support from the EA staff, from application stage through to post-camp. Some of those groups who had been involved with previous programmes noted the more streamlined application process, for example, applying for funding under each of the three bands is now much clearer. The EA demonstrated flexibility in their management of the programme and provided support to those groups who did not meet the initial criteria. However, a minority of groups stated that it was still too bureaucratic, they found that the application process was too complicated and that they needed a more simplified version of the application form. Following ETI discussions with EA staff, a revised application process should be considered following the initial application. For example, the actual numbers attending the camps was in the majority of cases less than the initial application. In addition, times and venues also often changed. Although the EA reported that they have all of the changes recorded, a regularly updated programme profile would make the ongoing monitoring and final data collection more robust.

While the process of gathering evidence and self-evaluation needs further development, in one situation following an ETI visit, the camp co-ordinator responded with a very effective self-evaluation matrix which clearly outlined how the camp co-ordinator would resolve the issues raised, the actions to be taken and the expected outcomes. The response was a very good example of self-evaluation, and how to improve the learning for and safety of the young people.

While many of the groups asked young people to complete a baseline questionnaire, a majority of the groups visited did not follow through with it or give enough time to evaluate the outcomes. The use of baseline questionnaires needs to be followed up by the camp co-ordinators and their staff. While there is good information on the importance of self-evaluation, a majority of the camp co-ordinators and their staff do not understand fully the importance of the process, and as a consequence, more training and development is needed.

According to data provided by the EA², there has been an increase in applications from schools, although they continue to be underrepresented, particularly those with a history of shared education. The EA evaluation report states that this is due to the lack of sub-cover, timetabling issues, a lack of understanding of the vision aims and goals of the programme. In the school camp programmes observed by the ETI, the teachers and outside facilitators

² Appendix B, statistical data, EA evaluation summary report.

worked well together. The evidence is that a relatively low number of schools participate in the programme. The EA need to continue encourage more schools to become involved in order to benefit the young people, and enable them to play a more active role in building good relations. More explicit links with the school curriculum and school-only workshops are being explored by the EA for next year's programme.

While the EA data provides high level feedback from the programme, there are many outcomes that are not included in the report card and which should be considered. For example, the levels of participation by the young people in the programme activities; and a further breakdown of the types of "personal benefits" that 96.2%³ of respondents stated that they had achieved, such as increased confidence and participation linked to how they use those skills in other areas of their life. The ETI observed examples of how difference is more than just faith or community and/or nationality background but is, multifaceted, for example, embracing disability, and sexual orientation.

The report card should also take account of the inclusive, safe and welcoming environment provided by the staff for the young people in the programme. This is particularly beneficial for those young people who may need extra support, face additional barriers in their life or have never benefited from youth work interventions.

The ETI were able to observe a small number of social action projects which were showcased at the final residential. These activities promoted well the active participation by the young people and encouraged community involvement that is youth-led. This connects well with youth work policy and was a positive development to achieve the T:BUC vision and aims as it allows the young people to progress their learning while improving the communities where they live. In order to develop the social action projects further, there needs to be more comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the projects to demonstrate more effectively how the young people apply the skills acquired during the programme in other areas of their life and to inform future planning.

Although training for good relations work is not mandatory for groups to engage in the programme, the EA should capture and share the good practice in group work where it exists in programme events and social action projects. The majority of the staff who are not professional youth workers or teachers would benefit from further training in diversity and working with young people from ethnic minorities.

7. Safeguarding

In discussions with the young people, almost all stated that they felt safe and secure. They spoke highly of the volunteers and staff who created a positive environment which led to stimulating discussions around diversity, respect and understanding cultural difference.

Although the EA makes it clear that each organisation has a responsibility to follow their own particular safeguarding procedures, the following issues were identified:

- a minority of safeguarding policies did not comply with the current DE guidance;
- more clarification is needed between each of the organisations and the EA/DE/TEO on the quality assurance arrangements of safeguarding policies;

³ Appendix B. EA evaluation report, How well did we do it?

- there was little visible information for the young people on each programme, on how to raise a concern or make a complaint; and
- shared access with the public in a small number of the residential venues, needs to be fully risk assessed.

An important area for improvement is the need for each organisation to maintain a risk register for all of their programmes and activities.

Appendix A: Methodology and evidence base

Methodology

Across the period June to December 2019, a team of seven ETI inspectors agreed with the TEO a representative sample of programme events to visit (minimum of 10%). This sample included a range of rural, urban, schools, community, sports and faith-based group camps. The ETI evaluated the performance and impact of the programme using the Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework (ISEF) for Youth⁴ referenced to the three agreed outcomes for the programme, associated project level indicators and the EA Programme Report Card. During the visits, the inspectors engaged directly with organisers and participants to observe and gain feedback from leaders and young people.

Inspection evidence base

The ETI visited a total of 16 programme events, including three pre-camps, ten camps, three post-camps. In addition, the ETI also observed a 'Camps in the Community'⁵ event and the end of year showcase celebration event. The majority of the camps took place in the summer of 2019. In addition, a wide-range of relevant documentation was examined and discussions were held with the EA staff, camp co-ordinators, volunteers and young people. Inspectors met with a small number of volunteers and young adults within each event who confirmed their desire to use their experience and learning from the programme to assist in future planning. The EA collated and provided the ETI with a programme summary of the report cards completed by the camps during 2019-2020 and the end of year EA evaluation report.

⁴ <http://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/inspection-and-self-evaluation-framework-isef-effective-practice-and-self-evaluation-5>

⁵ The aim of Camps in the Community is to provide an opportunity for those young people participating in the TBUC Camps Programmes to share and celebrate their achievements.

Appendix B: Statistical Data

Table 1 (From the EA T:BUC Camps programme evaluation report 2019/20)

How much did we do? <i>Data in this section is based on evaluation reports returned from 110 groups</i>	How well did we do it? <i>Data in this section is based on 2451 respondents in post camp survey results</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No. of camps successful delivered – 127 ✓ No. of camps with evaluations complete -110 ✓ No. of participants as per evaluation reports – 4030 ✓ No. of pre camp hours delivered – 1687.5 ✓ No. of camp hours delivered – 3709.6 ✓ No of post camp hours delivered – 1944 ✓ No. of participants from Protestant communities - 1768 ✓ No. of participants from Catholic communities. - 1874 ✓ No of participants who had no religion. - 70 ✓ No. of participants who had “other” religion. - 318 ✓ No. of participants from each of the following ethnic backgrounds:* Asian - 71 Black - 94 White - 3356 Mixed - 70 Other – 22 ✓ No. participants with a disability - 275 ✓ No. participants not involved in youth club/community group before - 967 ✓ No. participants excluded from school - 76 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No. young people who completed the project (Post camp surveys) 2451 ✓ No. of young people who had fun taking part in the project 2418 ✓ No. of people who made friends with people from a different religious tradition/background at camp 2199 ✓ No. of young people who felt the camp environment was open and inclusive. 2412 ✓ %/ No. of participants who feel a personal benefit from the experience (e.g. confidence, skills, participation) 2358/ 96.2% ✓ %/No. participants who feel they would like to be more involved in peace building activities in the future. 2257/ 92.0%
Is anyone better off? (number)	Is anyone better off? (percentage)
<p><i>Data in this section relates to results from 2173 comparable overlap results for matching from respondents and only details a change in score between the surveys</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No of participants who feel more favourable towards people from a different religious/community background- 1,821 ✓ No of participants who feel more favourable towards people from a different ethnic background- 1,798 ✓ No. of participants who have a better understanding of other cultural traditions and backgrounds- 1,770 ✓ No. of participants who feel more strongly that the culture and traditions of different religious backgrounds add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland- 1,739 ✓ No. of participants who feel more strongly that the culture and traditions of different ethnic backgrounds add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland- 1,766 <p><i>Data below is based on 2451 respondents in post camp survey results</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No. of participants who plan to stay in contact with friends made at camp after the project ends- 2178 	<p><i>Data in this section relates to results from 2173 participants, providing % response at the end of the Camp programme</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ % who feel more favourable people towards people from a different religious/community background. 83.8% ✓ % who feel more favourable towards people from a different ethnic background. 82.7% ✓ % who have a better understanding of other cultural traditions and backgrounds. 81.5% ✓ % of participants who feel more strongly that the culture and traditions of different religious backgrounds add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland 80.0% ✓ % of participants who feel more strongly that the culture and traditions of different ethnic backgrounds add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland 81.3% <p><i>Data below is based on 2451 respondents in post camp survey results</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ % who plan to stay in contact with friends made at camp after the project ends 88.9%

According to the data supplied by the EA, a total of 127 camps were successfully delivered and at the time of writing this report, 110 camps had submitted their full evaluations, an 87% return rate. Although the data indicates a small reduction in overall participants from 4175 in 2018/19, to 4030 in 2019/20, there is a significant increase in the number of young people from ethnic backgrounds rising from 140 in 2018/19 to 235 in 2019/20. There are around twice as many young people attending the camps this year, compared to last year's data, who presented with a disability.

The programme report card is a useful tool to record data from the completed group evaluations and the evidence gathered from the feedback from young people. The data suggests that the T:BUC camps in the community achieved the desired outcomes of the overall programme and for over 80% of the 4,000 young people they are better off as a result of their experiences. The post-camp evaluation also highlights over 80% of young people who now feel more favourable towards people from a different religious/community background.

Sector	Number of Applications in 2018/19	Number of Applications 2019/20	Number of Groups Funded 2018/19	Number of Groups Funded 2019/20
Sports Groups	9	16	9	16
Faith Based Groups	12	17	12	17
EA Controlled Groups	26	31	25	31
Schools	9	19	9	17
Uniformed Groups	0	1	0	1
Community/ Voluntary groups	84	91	82	90
Other (Queens, Belfast)	3	3	3	3

The EA evaluation report table above demonstrates good coverage across Northern Ireland in the programme for 2019/20. In addition, from the evidence and data supplied by the EA, the gaps in the geographical coverage continue to improve with new partnerships forming and new groups applying to the programme. There is an appropriate emphasis by the EA to improve the number of applications from schools and uniformed organisations.

Appendix C: Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

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