

Northern Ireland Alternatives

**A Follow-Up Review of the Community
Restorative Justice Schemes operated by
Northern Ireland Alternatives**

February 2010





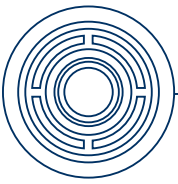
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**Criminal Justice Inspection
Northern Ireland**
a better justice system for all





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List of abbreviations

ACT	Action for Community Transformation
AP	Atlantic Philanthropies
BCC	Belfast City Council
BOP	Belfast Outreach Project
BRO	Belfast Regeneration Office
CBRJ	Community-Based Restorative Justice
CfY	Challenge for Youth
CJI	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
CRC	Community Relations Council
CSP	Community Safety Partnerships
CSU	Community Safety Unit (in the NIO)
DSD	Department for Social Development
IFI	International Fund for Ireland
JRCT	Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
MACS	Mediation and Community Support
NIA	Northern Ireland Alternatives
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NIO	Northern Ireland Office
PACT	Pupils and Community Together
PBNI	Probation Board for Northern Ireland
PPS	Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
RAPS	Restorative Adult Practices
UN	United Nations
YCS	Youth Conference Service
YJA	Youth Justice Agency for Northern Ireland



Chief Inspector's Foreword

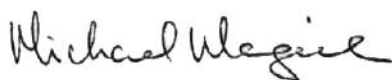
Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) conducted its original inspection of Northern Ireland Alternatives (NIA) in 2007. NIA is a collective of five community-based restorative justice schemes (CBRJ) operating in the mainly loyalist areas of Belfast and North Down. At that time, the Inspectorate assessed that the schemes were suitable for accreditation under the Government Protocol for community-based restorative justice schemes, subject to the views of the Suitability Panel. The schemes were subsequently accredited in February 2008.

The Inspectorate conducted this follow-up inspection to assess the progress made by the schemes since the original report and to provide assurance to Government that the schemes continued to operate to an acceptable standard. The criteria used during this inspection relates to the relevant sections of the United Nations '*Basic Principles on the use of Restorative Justice Programmes in Criminal Matters*'. Inspectors also sought evidence of the schemes adherence to the Protocol for Community-Based Restorative Justice Schemes.¹

Although the numbers of individuals referred through the protocol have been low, NIA has done everything expected of it. The report charts the progress that has been made by NIA in providing an expanding range of diversionary programmes and the relationship it now enjoys with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI), Social Services, Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), Belfast City Council (BCC) and some schools in North Belfast.

NIA have become an important part of the voluntary/community sector landscape in Northern Ireland and their reputation for dealing with difficult and troubled young people continues to grow.

This review was led by Brendan McGuigan and Tom McGonigle. I would like to thank all those who provided assistance during this inspection.



Dr Michael Maguire

Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland
February 2010

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¹ The Protocol for Community-Based Restorative Justice Schemes was published by the Government on 5 February 2007. Copies can be downloaded from the NIO website- www.nio.gov.uk

Section



Inspection Report

Background



1.1 Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) conducted a preliminary inspection of Northern Ireland Alternatives (NIA) in 2007. At that time the inspection was assessing NIA's readiness for accreditation and its potential to meet the standards set in the Government's Protocol for community-based restorative justice (CBRJ). The report recommended that NIA was ready for accreditation subject to their agreement to a number of conditions, and the deliberations of the Government's Suitability Panel who conducted background vetting into those involved with NIA. The outcome was that all five schemes were accredited by February 2008.

1.2 CJI had made a number of recommendations at the time of the original inspection and progress against these is assessed in this review. In addition the Inspectorate has now developed criteria for inspection of CBRJ schemes and has applied the criteria in this review. Inspectors undertook a full examination of all files opened by NIA since the last inspection to ensure that where criminal offences were identified, they were being correctly referred through the Protocol to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) for

investigation and submission to the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPS) for consideration of restorative caution. Inspectors also sought to determine the current standing of NIA with the criminal justice agencies and whether the necessary confidence was being maintained.

Criteria for inspection

- 1.3 The criteria relates to the relevant sections of the United Nations (UN) 'Basic Principles on the use of Restorative Justice Programmes in Criminal Matters', in particular the following:
- restorative processes should be used only with the free and voluntary consent of the parties (which may be withdrawn at any time);
 - agreements should be arrived at voluntarily and should be reasonable and proportionate;
 - disparities leading to power imbalances, and the safety of the parties, should be taken into consideration in referring a case to, and during, a restorative process;
 - parties should have the right to legal advice about the process;
 - before agreeing to participate, parties should be fully informed of



their rights, the nature of the process, and the possible consequences of their decision; and

- neither victim nor offender should be coerced, or induced by unfair means, to participate in the process or to accept the outcome.

1.4 Inspectors also sought evidence of the schemes' adherence to the Protocol for CBRJ schemes² and have developed a set of questions which included:

- are the schemes triaging cases correctly and passing appropriate cases to the PSNI?;
- are clients (victims of crime) properly informed at the outset about the role of NIA and its obligations under the Protocol?;
- are human rights, the rights of the child, and the UN Principles on Restorative Justice observed?;
- are they providing the police with all the details they require and indicating how they would deal with the case if it were referred back to them?;
- do they react correctly if other offences come to light while they are working with a client?;
- is the training of staff and volunteers adequate?;
- are offenders and victims given the necessary personal support in the restorative justice process?;
- does the scheme have access to expert advice when necessary, on matters of law and human rights?;
- do they have proper arrangements for the independent handling of complaints?; and

- are proper records kept and stored securely?

Methodology

1.5 In common with the inspections of all community-based restorative justice schemes, Inspectors visited NIA's central office and each of the schemes in turn. Inspectors also conducted one-to-one interviews with individuals and groups who have knowledge and experience of the schemes and the people who work within it. This included statutory and voluntary organisations, local politicians, community leaders and other individuals and groups who provide services or, who have influence in the areas in which the scheme operates.

1.6 Inspectors also spoke to the various bodies that are currently funding NIA including statutory agencies, international and local charitable organisations, to determine how NIA fulfilled the funding criteria. These interviews were supported on some occasions by the evaluation reports from the funding bodies. Inspectors conducted interviews with the Board of NIA, the schemes management committees, staff and volunteers. Inspectors also spoke with clients of the scheme both victims and offenders. They also spoke to some of the young people, their parents, teachers and social workers, who have been helped by the schemes. Inspectors observed the work undertaken by NIA in schools and spoke to the students, their teachers and senior managers.

² The Protocol for Community-Based Restorative Justice Schemes was published by the Government on 5 February 2007. Copies can be downloaded from the NIO website- www.nio.gov.uk



1.7 Inspectors conducted an examination of all case files held by the scheme since its last inspection in March 2007. Inspectors also examined minutes of management committee meetings, reports by the scheme co-ordinators, and records of contacts/referrals to other organisations and agencies. Records of expenditure, personnel and training records were also inspected. Copies of funding applications for the programmes and projects developed since then by the scheme were also reviewed.

1.8 Inspectors sought to determine the current nature and extent of NIA's work. During the last inspection it had been assessed that much of NIA's work *'relates to community development, support for victims and preventative or diversionary work with young people'*³. While the focus of this inspection was primarily on Protocol cases, Inspectors sought evidence of the entirety of NIA's work and in particular, the preventative and diversionary work it was engaged in with young people, and the potential bearing on the criminal justice system.

What has happened since the original inspection?

1.9 At the time of the original inspection NIA had a complement of 16 staff and it was being funded to deliver community restorative justice interventions and reparative programmes. Atlantic Philanthropies

(AP) and the Oak Foundation were providing most of the funding for this work. AP had indicated that it wanted to get into a matched funding arrangement with the NIO in the belief that NIA was making a substantial contribution to the working of the criminal justice system and as such, should be attracting government funding.

1.10 Although CJI had recommended accreditation in April 2007 it took over a year for the financial package to be agreed between AP and the NIO. This was a difficult period for NIA yet despite the uncertainty of their financial future, the organisation managed to retain staff albeit some were unpaid.

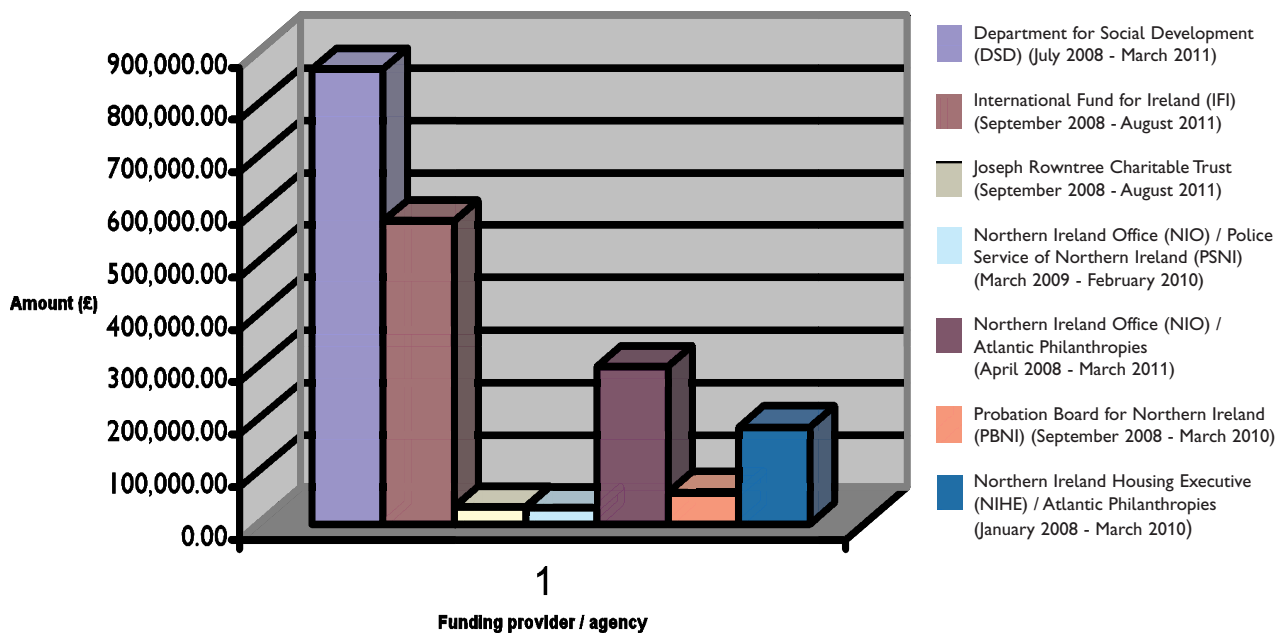
1.11 The situation improved in 2008 and 2009 with NIA securing major funding from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), the Department for Social Development (DSD), Atlantic Philanthropies (AP) and the International Fund for Ireland (IFI). The funding increased from £392,000 in 2006-07 to £647,000 in 2008-09 with a commitment from funders extending into 2011. With its financial future secure, NIA recruited additional staff, developed new programmes and made further funding applications.

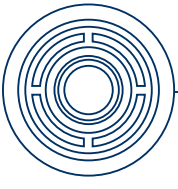
3 Northern Ireland Alternatives - A report with of an inspection with a view to accreditation under the Government's Protocol for Community-Based Restorative Justice, Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland, 03 May 2007 <http://www.cjini.org/CJINI/files/99/998904e7-fa99-4c91-be56-0b5105459087.pdf>

NORTHERN IRELAND ALTERNATIVES 3-YEAR FUNDING BREAKDOWN

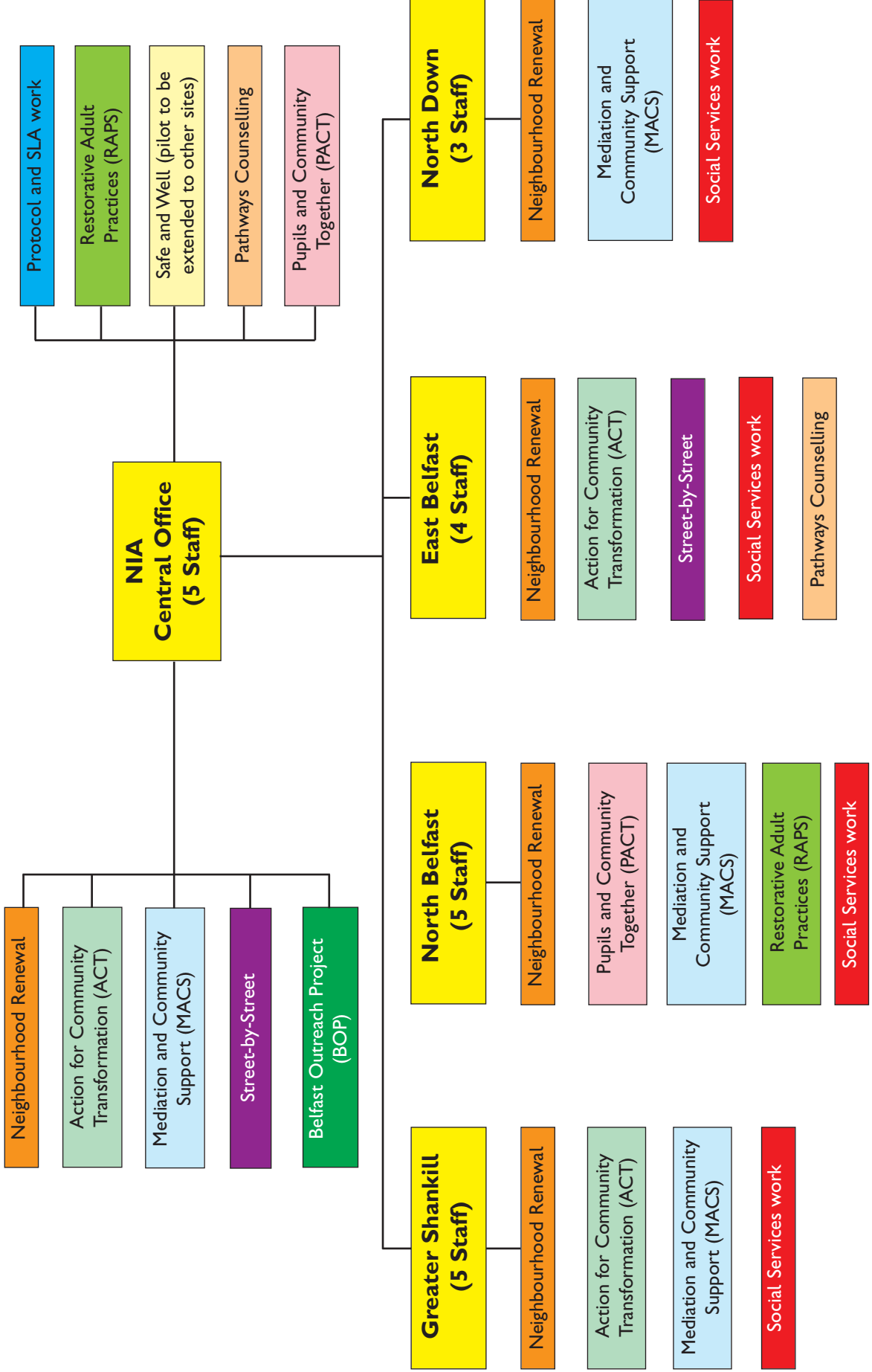
Funding Provider	Period of Funding			
	Year 1 (£) 2009	Year 2 (£) 2010	Year 3 (£) 2011	Total (£) 2009 - 11
Department for Social Development (DSD) <i>(July 2008 - March 2011)</i>	233,595.22	312,829.16	321,080.20	867,504.58
International Fund for Ireland (IFI) <i>(September 2008 - August 2011)</i>	180,439.83	193,338.26	204,057.91	577,836.00
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust <i>(September 2008 - August 2011)</i>	10,700.00	10,700.00	10,700.00	32,100.00
Northern Ireland Office (NIO)/Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) <i>(March 2009 - February 2010)</i>	30,000.00	Nil	Nil	30,000.00
Northern Ireland Office (NIO)/Atlantic Philanthropies (AP) <i>(April 2008 - March 2011)</i>	100,000.00	100,000.00	100,000.00	300,000.00
Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) <i>(September 2008 - March 2010)</i>	20,000.00	40,000.00	Nil	60,000.00
Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)/ Atlantic Philanthropies <i>(January 2008 - March 2010)</i>	100,000.00	85,000.00	Nil	185,000.00
Total (£)	674,789.05	741,867.42	635,838.11	2,052,440.58

3-year funding profile





Organisational Chart & Programme Delivery



Funding relationships

- 2.1 Inspectors conducted interviews with senior managers in each of the bodies currently funding NIA to assess how the organisation is viewed and its contribution to the voluntary/ community sector support for loyalist communities.

The Community Relations Council (CRC)

- 2.2 The Community Relations Council (CRC) is currently managing the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) funds which have been allocated to NIA (approx £578,000 over three years). Inspectors were told that Alternatives was viewed as a “safe pair of hands” and “a legitimate authentic, group that has made the journey without damaging their credibility with the difficult communities from which they originate.” The CRC indicated that Alternatives’ reporting mechanisms are strong and clear, they were meeting their deadlines and providing accurate financial information.

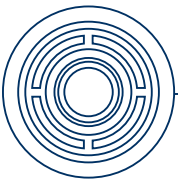
Probation Board for Northern Ireland

- 2.3 The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) have had a long association with NIA having previously provided funding through

their Community Development Fund. Following its accreditation, NIA is currently being funded by PBNI to deliver a number of programmes some of which are jointly delivered with Probation staff. The clients now include adjudicated adult offenders addressing Victim Awareness. This started out as a pilot scheme in North Belfast however, such was its success that it has been extended to other areas of Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland Alternatives won a tender to deliver restorative skills training to Probation Board staff and have participated in joint PBNI/NIA workshops.

The National Lottery

- 2.4 The National Lottery is funding a partnership which is made up of NIA, Challenge for Youth (CfY) and the Terry Enright Foundation to deliver the new ‘Safe and Well’ project which is funded by the National Lottery. This was described as an ambitious project designed to give troubled young people a chance to shape their own future. NIA are also involved with CfY to deliver the Belfast Outreach Project which is funded by Belfast Community Safety Partnership. This project is designed to provide detached youth work,



group work and drop-in facilities in designated 'hot spot' areas identified by the PSNI and the NIHE. CfY described their relationship with NIA as their most successful partnership.

Atlantic Philanthropies

- 2.5 Atlantic Philanthropies (AP) have been funding the CBRJ schemes for some time and in recent years this has moved into a matched funding arrangement with the NIO for the processing of Protocol Cases (£50,000). They are also in a matched funding relationship with the NIHE for NIA's delivery of mediation services (£35,000). Their assessment of NIA as a funding recipient is that they are very good in complying with the funding criteria, they have good robust internal systems, and continue to have 'open and honest' conversations especially when problems have arisen. They are regarded by AP as one of the voluntary and community sectors real success stories: an organisation that has managed to get its work mainstreamed, built effective partnerships and proved resourceful and innovative and no longer reliant on AP.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

- 2.6 The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) is currently in a matched funding arrangement with Atlantic Philanthropies (£35,000 each) in funding NIA to deliver the Mediation and Community Support (MACS) scheme. This is the second year of the scheme and the NIHE

believe that it is continuing to mature and should reach its full potential next year. They are entirely satisfied with the performance of NIA who they believe offer effective support through the scheme to the NIHE and the local communities.

Belfast Community Safety Partnership

- 2.7 The Belfast Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is currently funding (£110,000 over two years) CfY and NIA to deliver the Belfast Outreach Project. This is a two-year programme aimed at dealing with identified anti-social behaviour 'hot spots' in Belfast. The programme will deliver detached youth work, group work and drop-in facilities for young people identified as being involved in this type of activity.

Northern Ireland Office

- 2.8 The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) through the Community Safety Unit is currently providing funding to NIA of £50,000 per year to operationalise the Protocol. They are also funding the Street-by-Street project to the sum of £20,000 for this current financial year. The NIO while disappointed with the low numbers of Protocol Cases fully appreciate that accreditation has facilitated NIA's intensive intervention and prevention work with young people destined for the criminal justice system. NIA have consistently met the funding criteria set by the NIO and their levels of financial probity and responsiveness to information requests are assessed by the NIO as very good.

Police Service of Northern Ireland

2.9 The Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) is currently providing funding to NIA through the Policing with the Community Fund for the Street-by-Street project delivered by East Belfast Alternatives. Operational police officers were very supportive of this initiative and told Inspectors that NIA staff are on the street talking to young people and providing positive influences in dealing with anti-social behaviour, bonfires, gang fights and knife-carrying by young people.

Department for Social Development

2.10 The Department for Social Development (DSD) is currently funding NIA through its Neighbourhood Renewal Programme (approx £868,000 over three years) to help meet the neighbourhood renewal targets for each area.

NIA deliver the following:

- intensive youth and family support with young people involved in anti-social behaviour;
- prevention work with groups of young people involved in anti-social behaviour;
- delivery of cultural awareness programmes;
- sessions delivered in local schools;
- parental support;
- victim support;
- development and delivery of crime prevention sessions;
- conflict transformation work-bonfires, interface work, and removal of paramilitary murals;

- development of volunteer programme within the community; and
- promotion and facilitation of mediation services.

Inspectors were told by staff from the Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO) that “NIA are by a long way the most professional community group that BRO deal with. They are responsive and provide very detailed financial and practice feedback”. As a result of NIA volunteering additional measures they have been categorised as ‘low risk’. Their recruitment process in relation to employing staff with DSD monies was described as “fantastic, transparent and fair”. The overall assessment from BRO was that NIA are key players in Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships who deliver outcomes rather than mere talk.

CHAPTER 3:

Operational relationships with statutory agencies



Police Service of Northern Ireland

3.1 The PSNI have been involved at different levels with NIA for many years. A former senior officer who had led on the CBRJ schemes pathway to formal recognition sits on their Management Board. Local officers sit on the management committees of East Belfast and North Down schemes. Uniformed Neighbourhood Officers are regular visitors to all the schemes and are the main conduit for the work between NIA and the PSNI including the processing of Protocol cases. Inspectors spoke to officers in each scheme area and received positive feedback on the work of NIA and how it was enabling them to work more effectively within the community. Inspectors spoke to senior PSNI officers who confirmed that NIA had been to the forefront in enabling discussions between the PSNI and loyalist communities following the Whiterock Parade riots in North Belfast in 2005. They also referred to the work they [NIA] have done in engaging with difficult young people, some of whom were known to the police but who had been successfully diverted following the work with NIA. There was clear evidence of partnership working between the PSNI and NIA to


identify cases suitable for processing under the Protocol.

Probation Board for Northern Ireland

3.2 Inspectors were told that NIA is very responsible in sharing information appropriately with the PBNI. The PBNI recognises the benefits in having professionally qualified and trained NIA workers delivering services on behalf of probation. The PBNI pointed to the fact that NIA had won the tender to train PBNI staff in restorative methods. Their only concern related to the capacity of NIA to deal with the unforeseen, as a situation had arisen where the NIA staff member delivering the Victim/Offender Awareness scheme had gone on long-term sick leave. In this instance, it took some time for NIA to organise a replacement and for the PBNI to give permission before they could shift personnel. However, the PBNI's overall assessment is that NIA are highly-qualified, well trained and co-operative.

Youth Justice Agency

3.3 Inspectors were told that the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) has had only sporadic contact with NIA over the past few years. The view of senior



managers in the YJA is that NIA are well intentioned and that provided they do not attempt to deal with serious or inappropriate cases, they give no real cause for concern. The Youth Conference Service has seen NIA accompanying offenders and their parents to only a small number of youth conferences. They were more concerned about the possible inequality and differential service issues in those areas where NIA did not operate.

Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland

- 3.4 Inspectors were told that in all cases referred through the Protocol by NIA, the PPS had agreed to divert the cases back to NIA for the subsequent delivery of restorative action. All cases are referred to a senior director for decision and at this time, there are no plans to delegate this responsibility to a less senior level.

Social Services

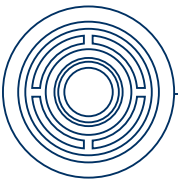
- 3.5 Social Services have been working with NIA for a number of years and in recent times have been funding them to deliver programmes aimed at dealing with difficult and troublesome young people. Inspectors were told that it is the view of senior managers that NIA have displayed levels of responsibility, were understanding of child protection issues and consistently displayed levels of competency and organisational maturity. This relationship has clearly progressed from the time of our previous inspection and says much about the levels of confidence that Social Services places with NIA.

Belfast City Council

- 3.6 Inspectors were told that one of the senior figures in NIA has had a seat on the Anti-Social Behaviour sub-group of the Belfast Community Safety Partnership (CSP) for the past number of years and has been making positive contributions to the work of the CSP. NIA is viewed by officials as authentic; is an organisation that engages in effective partnership working; and one that is prepared to work hard to make a difference.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

- 3.7 Inspectors were told that the first year of the MACS scheme was problematic and both the NIHE and NIA had to reach agreed understandings of the role each was to play in delivering the programme and what actually constituted a referral. These difficulties have been worked through to the extent that many more appropriate cases are coming through the system. Overall senior managers in the NIHE are satisfied with the service NIA are providing.
- 3.8 Inspectors also spoke to a number of voluntary and community organisations who work in the same geographical areas as NIA. All spoke highly of NIA, the integrity and openness which it brings to its work and the credibility it has achieved with some of most difficult and hard to reach communities. Inspectors heard of a case where NIA was invited to work with a number of young Roman Catholic males from a nationalist/republican area who had been involved in interface violence.



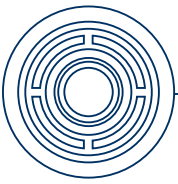
The voluntary body making the referral did so in the knowledge that *'Alternatives are viewed as a resource'*. The positive impact of this intervention was confirmed by local police.

- 3.9 Inspectors spoke to local politicians representing the various political viewpoints within unionism. In every instance, NIA was applauded for the work it was doing within the loyalist and unionist communities. Politicians were able to identify cases that they had referred to NIA and how issues had been resolved. Some of these cases related to interface tensions, contentious bonfires, and removal of paramilitary murals, neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour.

Delivery and outcomes



- 4.1 Inspectors examined the case files of all 14 individuals who have been referred through the Protocol and which are held centrally by NIA since their accreditation in 2008. Nine of the individuals had been referred back to the schemes through the Protocol, three individuals had been assessed as not having committed a crime, though the schemes continued to work with them as a result of their behaviour, and two were currently being processed by either PSNI or PPS. The files all related to juveniles aged between 11 and 17 years. They would all have been assessed as low level offenders and this was most likely, their first time in contact with the criminal justice system though this is not known to NIA. There was however a lack of paper contribution from both PSNI and PPS in the files which would have helped provide an audit trail for what was happening to the cases.
- 4.2 The files were tidy, typed and in chronological order and contained the necessary information to allow a full and thorough investigation by the police. They included details of the offender and victim and the nature of the criminal offences that had been committed. All files indicated the detailed attention to voluntary participation, parental and the young persons consent together with NIA's responsibility to disclose all information to the police. A flyer outlining NIA's complaints procedures which included details of the independent person nominated to review the complaints process was included in each of the files.
- 4.3 Inspectors also examined all 65 case files held by the schemes where either intensive youth support or restorative interventions had been applied. These were all about troubled young people who were either excluded from school, were out of the control of their parents, or were causing difficulties within their communities. There was no evidence on file to suggest that any of these cases should have been referred through the Protocol. Inspectors heard extremely positive comments from the social workers, teachers and police officers involved with these young people in relation to the contribution of NIA staff. In many instances, positive long term relationships had been achieved as many of the young people still call into the scheme premises to tell staff what is happening in their lives. In many cases NIA continues to be involved not only with the children, but their parents as well.



- 4.4 Inspectors examined training materials, lesson plans and observed some of the programmes being delivered by NIA. They spoke to clients of the scheme, their parents, their teachers, their social workers, their probation officers, and also the police officers who may have had some involvement in the case. Inspectors also spoke to some of the victims who were entirely supportive of the work undertaken by NIA and how their intervention had made a difference in their lives.
- 4.5 During 2008 and 2009 NIA managed to secure substantial funding from a variety of sources to deliver an increasing number of new programmes (see Appendix 1). This has allowed NIA to plan for the future and to employ well qualified staff to support and deliver the programmes. The chart at the end of Chapter 1 show the numbers of staff employed in each of the offices and the programmes currently being delivered at each site.
- 4.6 It was evident to Inspectors that NIA is now operating at a different level than that observed in 2007. Funding and staffing levels have been secured for the next three years and there is a more corporate feel to the organisation as a result of this stability. Inspectors looked firstly at the previous recommendations and sought evidence to establish what degree of progress had been achieved. Inspectors graded the recommendations as either achieved/not achieved.
- 4.7 Inspectors spoke to a number of NIA Board members all of whom were entirely supportive of the progress being made by the organisation. Some of those on the Board are also involved in delivering support services in the area. They believe that NIA has retained its credibility and integrity within the communities that it operates. There are still challenges in terms of how NIA relates to the YJA and how a community-based organisation deals with persistent offenders.
- 4.8 The Board monitor NIA's performance in dealing with Protocol cases and remarked at the disproportionate energy and effort being made by NIA in getting cases and meeting what they believed was the bureaucratic expectation of the system. They described NIA as a world class community project and in particular identified the synergy and leadership provided by the two main figures as being ethical and authentic.
- 4.9 During this inspection, Inspectors heard unanimous support for the work of NIA and the contribution the organisation was making in helping make the lives of people living within some of the most socially deprived loyalist areas of Greater Belfast and North Down, better. Their willingness to engage with the statutory agencies has earned them real respect and a desire to increase this level of partnership working.



Recommendation 1

The schemes must operate in accordance with the Protocol and meet all the criteria specified in it.

Status: Achieved

NIA has processed a total of 12 individuals through to the PSNI as Protocol cases and a further two at the time of inspection were being processed by either PSNI or PPS. The numbers are disappointing but this is beyond NIA's control. Inspectors were told that the community is less well-disposed towards NIA since the introduction of the Protocol as it means cases must be referred to the police and the community often do not want that intervention. Inspectors examined all Protocol files, they were comprehensive documents providing a clear audit trail and record of contacts, discussions and outcomes. Inspectors' assessment was that all cases were referred correctly and that the criteria had been fully applied. Inspectors also examined 65 other case files where restorative interventions had been made or intensive support given to troubled young people.

Recommendation 2

In particular there needs to be clarity about the limits beyond which delinquent or anti-social behaviour needs to be treated as criminal and reported to the police.

Status: Achieved

Inspectors examination of all case files held by NIA showed clearly that where there was any evidence of criminal behaviour, those cases were being referred to the PSNI. Many of the Intensive Youth Support case files did relate to incidents of

anti-social behaviour, the reports usually emanated from the community, some however were made by other voluntary and statutory organisations, including the PSNI and Social Services.

Recommendation 3

The individual schemes must remain within the NIA family, at least for the next two years.

Status: Achieved

All of the schemes are firmly included within the NIA family. The use of headed forms and file format has added a corporate feel and consistency to their documentation.

Recommendation 4

North Down Impact should in due course detach itself from its parent association and become established as an independent charity within Northern Ireland Alternatives.

Status: Achieved

North Down Alternatives was created in 2008 and has now successfully achieved charitable status within NIA.

Recommendation 5

The training material on human rights needs to be made more specific, as suggested in the Appendix.

Status: Achieved

Inspectors examined the training materials being used by NIA and spoke to the providers of the Restorative Practice course at the University of Ulster. They confirmed that the basic human



rights principles drawn from a range of international legal standards and domestic legal protections are being applied.

Recommendation 6

Although record-keeping is in general good, there should be more consistency in the use of contact sheets, 'contracts' with young clients, and reporting outcomes from programmes.

Status: Achieved

In the file examination, Inspectors found consistent evidence of the use of contact sheets and the existence of their contracts with young clients. The reports to funders were comprehensive and included NIA's performance against agreed targets. Inspectors also read evaluation reports commissioned by funders of the various programmes run by NIA, all were positive.

Recommendation 7

The Board of NIA should as soon as possible be reconstituted to bring the formal position into line with its de facto composition.

Status: Achieved

The Board of NIA has been reconstituted and now includes a former senior PSNI officer and a number of members who represent voluntary, community and statutory organisations.

4.10 Inspectors found that following examination of the case files, interviews with staff, volunteers and clients of the scheme, that the 'UN Principles on the use of Restorative Justice Programmes in Criminal Matters' were being observed. In every case file examined, there were

consent forms for each stage of the restorative process reinforcing the principle of voluntary participation.

Inspectors also found good evidence to support the answers to the following questions:

- ***Are the schemes triaging cases correctly and passing appropriate cases to the PSNI?***

Yes. Inspectors examined the Protocol cases and assessed that in each case the NIA involvement had been in complete accordance with the terms set out in the Protocol. Inspectors also examined all other case files including the Intensive Youth Support cases and did not find any deviation from either the spirit or letter of the Protocol.

- ***Are clients (victims of crime) properly informed at the outset about the role of NIA and its obligations under the protocol?***

Yes. Those involved with the scheme were clear about their obligations under the Protocol and were adamant that they informed all potential clients at the outset of their contact.

Inspectors also spoke to a small number of clients who confirmed that this had been their experience when dealing with NIA.

- ***Are human rights, the rights of the child, and the UN Principles on Restorative Justice observed?***

Yes. The case file examination revealed that in every case and at every stage in the process, consent was sought and recorded both from the young people and their parent or guardian.

- ***Are they [NIA] providing the police with all the details they require and***

indicating how they would deal with a case if it were referred back to them?

Yes. In all the cases referred to the PSNI, the schemes had provided all relevant information. Inspectors also spoke to the PSNI investigating officers who confirmed that they were entirely supportive of the way in which NIA had processed the cases.

- ***Do they react correctly if other offences come to light while they are working with a client?***

Yes. Most cases examined by Inspectors involved a degree of partnership working with at least one or more statutory agencies. It was clear to Inspectors that NIA enjoys the trust and confidence of statutory providers particularly in the sharing of information.

- ***Is the training of staff and volunteers adequate?***

Yes. Inspectors examined and assessed the training materials currently in use and found them to be of a very high standard incorporating the material recommended in the initial CJI report. NIA staff have all completed the University of Ulster (Jordanstown) six-month course in Restorative Practice, a small number have gone on to achieve a post-graduate diploma and one is currently completing a PHD. NIA is currently delivering the Open College Network Level 2 to young people in the four schools that they are working in.

- ***Are offenders and victims given the necessary personal support in the restorative justice process?***

Yes. The case files indicate that NIA

staff invest a great deal of time and effort in supporting people through the restorative process. NIA is currently delivering a victims awareness programme to NIPB. Inspectors also spoke to a number of victims and offenders in each of the schemes, all spoke positively about the level of interest and commitment shown by NIA staff.

- ***Does the scheme have access to expert advice when necessary, on matters of law and human rights?***

Yes. NIA has developed a positive relationship with a number of leading academics who in the past have evaluated their progress.

- ***Do they have proper arrangements for the independent handling of complaints?***

Yes. In each of the case files examined, Inspectors found a complaints information leaflet which identified the complaints process and the Independent Person to whom dissatisfied clients could bring their unresolved complaint to. Inspectors spoke to the Independent Person who confirmed the process and who reported that to date, there have been no complaints.

- ***Are proper records kept and are they stored securely?***

Yes. All Protocol files are held by NIA in its central office, in locked cabinets and in secure premises. Each of the schemes held their own case files in locked cabinets and where the scheme was sharing facilities with other groups, the manager kept the locked cabinet inside a locked NIA office.

Conclusions



- 5.1 Inspectors were impressed with the current range of programmes being delivered by NIA and how these were impacting in conflict transformation and peace building. The work undertaken by NIA within the schools is valued by teachers and parents alike. It was described to Inspectors as a real enabler for young people in understanding what a 'Shared Future' could look like, a society where disputes, disagreements and difference are managed without recourse to violence.
- 5.2 While the number of Protocol cases was disappointing, Inspectors' assessment is that NIA has done everything expected of it. Managers of the schemes told Inspectors that NIA's reputation has suffered within local communities as a result of their steadfast adherence to the Protocol. They find it a 'hard sell' to the parents of young offenders whose expectation was that NIA would get involved with their children as an alternative to their involvement with the formal criminal justice system.
- 5.3 This analysis is shared by the police who are actively pursuing the feasibility of referring police diversionary caution cases to NIA so that the individuals involved can participate in some of the reparative programmes currently being provided. This is actively being discussed with the NIO.
- 5.4 The irony of course is that NIA's ability to broaden their programme base and successfully bid for new funding was largely because of their accreditation and the significance placed on this by funders.
- 5.5 The PSNI are by in large relaxed about the small number of cases that have been processed to date through the Protocol. The involvement of local officers with each of the schemes has provided the police with a unique understanding of how difficult it has been to select appropriate cases to put through the Protocol. Inspectors were told by senior officials in both PSNI and NIO that the Protocol was developed at a time when there were concerns expressed by some stakeholders about the schemes' perceived association with paramilitary groups. They acknowledge that the world has moved on and a review of the Protocol is overdue. Inspectors concur with this assessment.
- 5.6 Inspectors did not hear any criticisms from any of the organisations or



Individuals canvassed in this Inspection about NIA's operation of the Protocol or indeed its wider activities. It is the breadth of these activities and their approach which is proving attractive to the funding bodies. NIA has continued to build a positive working relationship with the police. The police in turn acknowledge and value the preventative and intervention work that NIA is engaged in, and how the schemes are partnering front line officers in resolving very complex community issues. But it is not only the view of the police, Social Services, Probation and local schools are all seeing the value of NIA's work in helping divert young people away from the criminal justice system.

organisation maintains its restorative justice values to underpin its valuable work.

- 5.7 Inspectors commend NIA for the way in which it has developed since the first inspection. The organisation is possibly coming to a time when there is a need to consolidate this rapid growth. However, such are the needs of the Protestant and loyalist working class communities that NIA will find it difficult not to respond to further requests for their intervention and support, such is the nature of their success.
- 5.8 Inspectors' only real concern is NIA's capacity to continue to meet the increasing demand for their interventions and a fear that the organisation over-stretches itself and staff begin to 'burn-out'. NIA's Management Board is alert to this possibility and have indicated that they will be seeking to consolidate the progress made. They will also seek to guarantee that NIA retains its uniqueness by ensuring that the



Section



Appendices



Appendix 1: Summary of projects operated by Northern Ireland Alternatives

Action for Community Transformation (ACT)

ACT is a conflict transformation programme designed to work specifically with former paramilitaries of the Ulster Volunteer Force and Red Hand Commando of all ages. It is also designed to work with young men within the community who are on the fringes of paramilitary groups or violence within the community, for example interface rioting.

Pupils and Communities Together (PACT)

PACT is a cross-community schools initiative in North Belfast that has developed organically out of work that was delivered in Hazelwood College. There are four schools involved in the programme: Hazelwood College, St Patricks, Bearnageeha, Boys Model and Girls Model. The programme delivers training in personal development, restorative practices and mediation to enable students to take personal responsibility for resolving their own disputes.

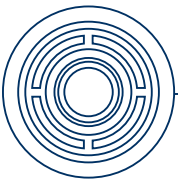
- A group of students in each school are trained to be mediators on a restorative Assistance Panel and disputes are referred to the panel by senior management as opposed to a punitive sanction being handed out by the school.
- Mediators work with the victim and the offender and bring them together in a panel meeting to help reach an agreement for the way forward.
- Disputes between teachers and pupils have been referred to the Panel.
- Students from the schools have been brought together to encourage mutual learning and community relations.

Mediation and Community Support (MACS) in partnership with NIHE

MACS is a service providing mediation and community support for victims and families living in social housing and suffering from anti-social behaviour in the Greater Shankill, North Belfast, Newtownabbey and Bangor.

Restorative Adult Practices (RAP) in partnership with PBNI

RAPS is a victim awareness programme delivered to adjudicated adult offenders in North Belfast. Some of the offences related to manslaughter and domestic violence. Following the success of the pilot scheme, the PBNI have decided to continue the programme through their Community Development Fund, and extend it to include the Antrim and Ballymena areas.



Referrals from Social Services

East Belfast Alternatives and Greater Shankill Alternatives have been working with Social Services for a number of years providing intensive support for disadvantaged young people and their families. This has now developed into a funding arrangement with Social Services buying places for young people and their families on a number of existing programmes delivered by NIA.

Pathways Counselling Project, East Belfast

This project is a partnership between East Belfast Alternatives, East Belfast Mission, Charter NI, EPIC and the Belfast Trust. Funding has been provided by Investing for Health for this community-based counselling programme for ex-prisoners, former paramilitaries and their families as well as victims of paramilitary punishment attacks.

Partnership with Challenge for Youth and Terry Enright Foundation


This is a pilot project funded by the National Lottery which is aimed at troubled young people and is designed to deliver youth empowerment and training, family support, restorative interventions and partnership building with statutory agencies.

Belfast Outreach Project

This project is a partnership between NIA and Challenge for Youth funded by Belfast Community Safety Partnership and aimed at dealing with anti-social behaviour. The programme will deliver a combination of detached youth work, group work and drop-in facilities in designated hotspot areas of Belfast working closely with PSNI and NIHE.

Street-by-Street

This project is delivered by East Belfast Alternatives and involves an outreach team of staff and volunteers working mostly at night and at weekends with the Walkway Community Centre. The programme provides reassurance to elderly residents and works with young people gathering at identified anti-social behaviour hot spots. The team work closely with PSNI, Neighbourhood Wardens and existing youth groups.



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