

# MENDING TROUBLED COMMUNITIES

**To what extent does the Communities in Transition programme in Northern Ireland realise community-based Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration of Paramilitaries?**



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## Executive Summary

This thesis investigates to what extent grassroots initiatives in Northern Ireland, under the Communities in Transition (CIT) programme, realise community-based disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR). It is twenty-three years since the Good Friday Agreement, which brought an end to the large-scale violence in the streets of Northern Ireland. However, the paramilitary factions that became so prominent throughout the thirty years of conflict are still in operation today, in addition to a number of dissident groups who reject the Good Friday Agreement. These paramilitaries, both Republican and Loyalist, have become indistinguishable from organised crime gangs in a contemporary Northern Ireland, dealing drugs, money lending, community policing, killing, bombing, punishment beatings and prostitution. There are varied explanations for their continued presence in society, such as offering protection, or fighting a cause, but the main explanation appears to be the profitability of their enterprises. Another contributing factor to their continuation was the weakness of Northern Ireland's reintegration programme, where the government's role was non-existent, leaving the ex-prisoners and former combatants to set up their own organisations and reintegrate themselves. Discriminatory employment procedures led many of the ex-prisoners back into the paramilitaries, as it was a viable source of income.

A positive peace is less achievable whilst these paramilitaries are in operation. In 2015, the Fresh Start Agreement, drafted by the British, Irish and Northern Irish governments, included an Executive action plan on Tackling Paramilitarism and Organised Crime. The plan uses a two-track approach. The first is a top-down approach where the police and Department of Justice deal with the criminality and justice aspect of paramilitarism. The second is a bottom-up approach, where civil society is tasked with building capacities within these communities. The CIT programme uses varying community-based organisations from areas such as health and well-being, art and culture, restorative practices, community safety and young people. The CIT programme is a formal part of the reintegration process in Northern Ireland, and is used as a case throughout this research to help answer the main research question; *To what extent does the CIT programme realise community-based DDR?*

To answer the research question this thesis investigates the CIT programme by, firstly, *identifying how these grassroots initiatives implement a programme that aims to lessen the coercive control of paramilitary groups in the individual communities.* The topic of grassroots initiatives combatting paramilitarism is currently under researched, adding relevance to this

thesis. The interviewees that are spoken to in this research are all pertinent stakeholders in the CIT programme. Discourse and thematic analysis were used to analyse the data collected from the interviewees and identified three key strategies used by the grassroots initiatives, in their own words: 1) building ‘community autonomy’, 2) using ‘diversionary methods’, and, 3) applying ‘generational work’. All three of the strategies highlight the capacity building work that the CIT programme undertakes, through upskilling, employability, and improving education attainment.

Literature on the second wave of DDR highlights a number of criteria that are deemed necessary for the successful implementation of the process. First, authors assume that successful implementation of DDR requires an important role for community-based organisations. Second, in the second wave of DDR programmes it was realised that to be successful, such programmes should include peacebuilding, and address root causes of violent conflict, including socio-economic capacity building, ensuring community participation and contributing to community safety. Third, successful DDR requires that former combatants, and the broader war-affected communities, are included in the process.

The second part of this analysis thus explored *to what extent CIT fulfil these criteria for community-based DDR?* The analysis brings out that the CIT programme fulfilled these criteria to a certain extent. Firstly, the findings show that the CIT programme does not only include peacebuilding, but implements strong grassroots peacebuilding, adding strength to the community-based DDR process. Secondly, in relation to addressing root causes, the strategic themes underline the many activities, including homework clubs, educational incentives, opportunities to gain accredited qualifications, and producing positive representation of the community through art and culture, all of which build socio-economic capacity. Community safety is an overarching theme throughout the CIT programme, with safety initiatives being carried out in every participating community. The programme ensured participation through involving the community in the design, creation and implementation of the programme. Lastly, former combatant involvement in the programme is found to be lacking, and cooperation between the ex-prisoner and former combatant community is currently meagre. Thus, greater collaboration and inclusion of the former combatant community is necessary, if successful reintegration is to be realised.

This research adds nuance to the debate in the literature on how to ensure DDR is reconciliatory in nature. The literature argues that for DDR to foster reconciliation, social capital must be

built amongst all the stakeholders involved in the DDR process, and both social and economic reintegration strategies for the former combatants are to be included in the programme. To improve the likelihood of Northern Ireland achieving reconciliation, social capital, which includes, communication, cooperation, mutual respect and trust, must be enhanced between the CIT programme, and therefore, the state, and the ex-prisoner and former combatant community. Following that, social and economic reintegration can be implemented, granting these communities a greater chance of realising reconciliation.

## List of Abbreviations

CBO	Community Based Organisation
CIT	Communities in Transition
CRJI	Community Restorative Justice Ireland
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DDR	Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
EU	European Union
GFA	Good Friday Agreement
INLA	Irish National Liberation Army
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRC	Independent Reporting Commission
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NIACRO	Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
OIRA	Official Irish Republican Army
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
STARS	Striving Toward a Restorative Society
TEO	The Executive Office
UDA	Ulster Defence Association
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

Many people, from outside of Northern Ireland, are under the illusion that the country is now a post-conflict, peaceful society, this however, is not the case. Present day Northern Ireland, 23 years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), is still deeply divided and Catholics and Protestants in working class neighbourhoods continue to be segregated (Grattan, 2020). The security situation has been much improved since the implementation of the GFA, however, an overall peace has been difficult to achieve. The GFA brought with it a landmark power-sharing deal, and an impressive police reform, yet continued mistrust and tension between the nationalist, Sinn Fein party and the unionist, Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) has prolonged instability in the country (Congressional Research Service, 2021). Amidst this tumultuous peace has also been the continuation of the paramilitary groups that were so prevalent during the 'Troubles'. The paramilitaries, as we know them today, are noticeably different to the groups that came to the fore in the late 1960's. Throughout the 1960's the Catholic communities protested for their civil rights and were met by violent Loyalist crowds, which culminated with the Battle of the Bogside, in Derry, in August 1969. The unrest spread to Belfast, where Catholics were burned from their homes by Loyalist mobs. Subsequently, in December 1969 the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) were formed, as a break away from the Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA), to commence a violent campaign against the British government, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and Loyalist's. In response, the Loyalist's resurrected paramilitary groups such as the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) to carry out their own guerrilla campaigns as well as protect their communities (Lesson 1: the Northern Ireland Conflict, n,d). Accompanying these established paramilitary organisations, numerous other separate paramilitaries, both Republican and Loyalist, were created and are still in operation. These include, Red Hand Commando (RHC) and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), as well as dissident paramilitary groups (Secretary of State, 2015).

The paramilitary group that stole the limelight throughout the 'Troubles', in terms of media coverage, was the PIRA (Condit & Cottle, 1997). The PIRA, through the watchful eye of the media, underwent their Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) process, as were part of the terms of the Good Friday Agreement (DDR in Northern Ireland - Review Panel in Northern Ireland, n,d). However, there are significant differences between what the media portrayed and what happened in reality. The PIRA and numerous other republican groups and

a number of Loyalist paramilitaries are by no means demobilised, and continue to have a tight grip on their communities today (Secretary of State, 2015). There may not be conflict to the extent of what transpired during the 'Troubles', but nevertheless, there is still conflict. These paramilitaries are immersed in conflict, in the form of punishment beatings, executions, threats and policing their communities (McDonald, H, 2018). Furthermore, they are engraved into the organised crime landscape in Northern Ireland, through drug dealing, money laundering, extortion and fuel laundering (McCaffrey, 2014). This has instilled fear into many residents of these communities (McDonald, H, 2018).

Another significant term in the GFA was the release of politically motivated prisoners. Prisoners who were affiliated with paramilitary organisations that adhered to the ceasefire were granted release subsequent to a review process which took into account the seriousness of the offence as well as the prisoner's likelihood to be a danger to the community (Democratic Progress Report, 2013). A total of 428 prisoners were released under the early release programme, 143 of which were serving life sentences (RTE Archive, 2000). Consequently, as well as former combatants, these ex-prisoners also had to be reintegrated into the community. In many instances it was more difficult for the ex-prisoners, as they were branded as such, whereas many of the former combatants who did not serve prison sentences could uphold their anonymity. The Northern Ireland government was obliged to assist released prisoners in finding employment opportunities and further education through the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO). However, this would involve the ex-prisoners adopting the label 'criminal', which proved problematic as many prisoners were reluctant to do so (Democratic Progress Report, 2013). The reintegration process in Northern Ireland has been largely left up to the ex-prisoners themselves, via the establishment of their own support groups, with minimal state involvement (Waller, 2021). This lacklustre reintegration process has contributed to the continuation of paramilitarism within these communities, as the ex-prisoners, particularly loyalist ex-prisoners, view returning to a life of crime as a better, or more profitable, alternative to reintegrating. A Unionist politician summed up the reasoning for their return to paramilitarism; "because the paramilitary groups provide a place for esteem and affirmation that the ex-prisoners don't get from their local community, or elected officials, who most often treat them with disgust and disdain" (Waller, 2021).

There have been a number of both top-down and bottom-up approaches that have been implemented over the last 23 years that have aimed at combating paramilitarism in these

communities (Hancock, 2008). The most noticeable top-down approaches are in relation to the criminalisation of these groups (O'Reilly, 2014). These approaches build on the assumptions that if you punish those involved with these organisations this will discourage youths to join. However, the argument can be made that punishing these members for taking part in paramilitary activity is a situation that can be pre-empted. This is where bottom-up approaches are introduced by the state and the EU, as well as civil society. Grassroots, community-based initiatives aim to work closely with the members of the community to try and address the issue *before* someone ends up in jail (Hancock, 2008) As well as pre-empting the issue of people joining the paramilitary groups, these initiatives are expected to work directly with members, or ex-members, of these groups to allow them to have a more active role in society.

One particularly prominent initiative, 'Fresh Start', came into effect in 2015, consisting of an Executive action plan for Tackling Paramilitarism and Organised Crime in Northern Ireland (Affairs, nd). Under this action plan are a number of separate projects all aimed toward dealing with paramilitaries and organised crime in Northern Ireland, both top-down and bottom up. One such bottom-up project is the Communities in Transition (CIT) programme, that focuses on eight separate communities, both Catholic and Protestant, that are under the coercive control of paramilitary groups (justice-ni.gov.uk, nd). The aim of the programme is to implement a number of community-based, grassroots initiatives to deal with various aspects of life in these societies.

The CIT programme is a formal part of the reintegration process in Northern Ireland. Thus, the main research question that is investigated is:

*To what extent does the CIT programme realise community-based DDR?*

Whilst literature on community-based DDR does acknowledge grassroots initiative's role in the reintegration process, the researcher found little, to no, mention of how grassroots initiatives contribute to tackling ongoing paramilitary activity in their respective communities. So, to find an answer to this main research question the researcher first explores the question:

*1. How grassroots initiatives, as part of the CIT programme, implement a programme that aims to lessen the coercive control of paramilitaries within communities in Northern Ireland?*

If the CIT programme can successfully adopt criteria of successful DDR, it can disrupt the process of recruitment by the paramilitaries, which overall aids the demobilisation, or

remobilisation, of these groups. Therefore, the researcher subsequently investigates the question:

*2. To what extent does CIT fulfil the criteria for community-based DDR as they have been identified in the literature? (i.e., to what extent does CIT contribute to peacebuilding; address root causes of conflict; and involve both combatants and the broader war effected community?)*

Overall, this thesis investigates whether the CIT programme is contributing towards a positive peace in Northern Ireland. The second wave of DDR evolved the process, by not just striving toward the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants, but also contributing to the reconciliation process in post-conflict societies. Thus, the research objective is to contribute to the ongoing discussion in the literature on what is needed to ensure DDR is reconciliatory in nature.

## 1.2 Societal Relevance

The operation of these paramilitary groups within these numerous communities is a serious hinderance towards finding a sustainable peace in Northern Ireland. As long as these groups are carrying out punishment beatings, executions, stabbings and bombings, the residents of these areas will never find peace. Therefore, this research seeks to analyse the work of these grassroots initiatives to gain a better understanding of their importance in diminishing the stronghold the paramilitaries maintain over these neighbourhoods

Analysing the implementation and success of these initiatives is of the utmost importance for a number of reasons. Firstly, for the communities who want to relinquish themselves from the grasp of the paramilitaries. Secondly, for other post-conflict communities that face similar situations in other parts of the world, such as the Ukraine or Colombia. This study can add to the literature on how grassroots initiatives can be operationalised to combat paramilitary activity and organised crime, which can be used as a guideline in similar post conflict societies that are under the control of paramilitaries or militias.

This research analyses the goals of these initiatives, how they are implemented, how they are perceived within and outside the community, and how the initiatives are received in the communities. Furthermore, it uncovers how these initiatives are directly affecting the flow of youths that are vulnerable for recruitment to these paramilitaries, and also finds out whether paramilitary members or ex-members have a participatory role in these initiatives. As this 'Fresh Start' programme was only brought into existence in 2015, there has been no study, as of yet, analysing the performance of the CIT programme. Therefore, this research helps fill this

knowledge gap that exists on the impact of this particular action plan. These findings add to the overall debate on how to ensure DDR, specifically reintegration, is reconciliatory in nature, which can be of considerable significance for numerous post-conflict societies, both presently and in the future.

### 1.3 Scientific Relevance

The ‘local turn’ in peacebuilding looks at how, in the last 30 years, there has been a shift away from the traditional liberal peacebuilding, toward the local. This is a focus more on restorative justice, rather than retributive justice.

This thesis addresses Demobilisation Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) and how it is unfolding in the case of Northern Ireland. A look at the role of civil society in peacebuilding is incorporated into this study and further refined to the role of grassroots, community-based initiatives in the struggle to achieve peace. Specifically, this research will add to debate in the literature on what is needed in the DDR process to inspire reconciliation. Nso (2020) and Colvin (2007) both express the importance of civil society in the processes of DDR and also reconciliation, rehabilitation and reinsertion. Torjsten (2009) makes the argument that DDR puts a strain on the receiving communities and expresses how there are serious dilemmas when it comes to deciding how the benefits should be balanced between receiving communities and the ex-combatants. Most of the literature is in agreement that the success of DDR is down to the participation of ex-combatants in the initiatives, adopting a peacebuilding approach, and addressing the root causes of the violent conflict. The debate in the literature on how to promote reconciliation in the DDR process includes Willems and Van Leeuwens (2015) argument that social and economic reintegration are both vital toward aiding reconciliation, and both Bowd (2008) and Lotscher (2016) advocating for the merits of building social capital. This research, through analysing the CIT programme as a case study, in relation to implementation and performance, as well assessing to what extent it realises community-based DDR, is able to identify to what degree it is fostering reconciliation, and additionally, what more it needs to do to contribute to the reconciliation process.

What is nuanced about this research is that it analyses an initiative that is yet to be scientifically explored. This research uses Skarlato’s et al. (2013) framework for key elements of successful grassroots peacebuilding, to assess CIT’s performance as a grassroots peacebuilder. Skarlato et al. (2013) developed these key elements through exploring the experiences of 120 grassroots actors. This research can add to the complex debate of what successful grassroots initiatives should consist of.

This research initially set out to assess the effectiveness of these grassroots initiatives. However, throughout the course of the research it became apparent that this would not be feasible or practical due to a couple of reasons. Firstly, many of these initiatives are still in their infancy as a number of them experienced a delayed, or slowed, start as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Secondly, MacFarlane (2011) wrote a paper dedicated to community-based NGOs in grassroots peacebuilding and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, where he states, “In reality, much of the most useful activity in this field is conducted invisibly and is not tied to particular events; it is often not appreciable when carried out, its value only becoming apparent in combination with other events and actions when viewed over time.” Hence, determining the precise effect of the CIT programme is unfeasible as there are a number of different variables in each community. Rather than test the effectiveness of the CIT programme, the researcher decided to identify specific strategic themes, in relation to the implementation of the CIT programme, that became apparent throughout the research. Very little, if any, literature could be found on how grassroots initiatives lessen the coercive control of paramilitarism. Therefore, the strategies identified in this paper in reference to the ‘how’, can significantly add to the underdeveloped scientific field of how grassroots initiatives can help tackle paramilitary activity.

## 1.4 Research Objective and Research Questions

### 1.4.1 Research Objectives

As alluded to in the previous section, the objective of this research is to add to the debate in conflict studies on what is needed to ensure the Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) process in post-conflict societies promotes reconciliation. As this topic is very broad this research uses a case study which further refines the research field. Whilst there are many aspects of peacebuilding, this research explores bottom-up approaches to peace, more specifically, grassroots initiatives, as part of the CIT programme, in multiple communities in Northern Ireland. These communities are particularly unique as they are part of an Executive action plan, that was implemented in 2016, to tackle the coercive control paramilitary groups have over these communities. These findings can add to the growing literature on civil societies role in post-conflict countries.

### 1.4.2 Research Question

**Research question-** To what extent does the CIT programme realise community-based DDR?

Initially, the main research question was; how do grassroots initiatives help tackle paramilitary activity? However, throughout the course of the research it was realised that analysing the

operationalisation of the CIT programme is better served as a sub-question, contributing to assessing what extent CIT complements community-based DDR. The reason for investigating CITs compatibility with community-based DDR is a result of the researcher's keen interest in the continuation of paramilitarism. Moreover, throughout the research it became apparent that the CIT initiative didn't appear to associate itself with the DDR process in Northern Ireland, although it is a formal part of the process. The researcher found this interesting because, logically, if the overall plan is to tackle paramilitary activity within these communities, hence, eliminate these groups, one would assume that demobilising, and reintegrating these ex-prisoners and former/current paramilitaries is significantly important. Therefore, the researcher deemed it fitting to investigate what elements of community-based DDR the CIT programme incorporated. Exploring this research question, and constructing in-depth analysis on the work being done by the CIT programme, via its grassroots initiatives, fits into the debate on what is needed to ensure DDR is reconciliatory in nature as it inadvertently conveys how the CIT programme promotes reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

#### 1.4.3 Sub Questions

*1. How grassroots initiatives, as part of the CIT programme, implement a programme that aims to lessen the coercive control of paramilitaries within communities in Northern Ireland?*

This question started out as the main research question; however, it was deemed as more suitable to be a contributor to the main research question. This research question was initially chosen because after many hours of research in this area, it was found that since the implementation of CIT, there has been little research carried out on the operationalisation of these community-based initiatives. As mentioned previously in this chapter, the initial research question of measuring the effectiveness of the CIT programme proved unfeasible. Additionally, the researcher could not find literature that was dedicated to how grassroots initiatives combat paramilitarism.

The lack of research completed on this particular aspect of the Fresh Start Agreement is also a primary motivation. However, a curiosity of how exactly grassroots initiatives operate, especially toward tackling something as powerful as paramilitary groups, can also be classed as a motivation to undertake this specific research question.

Critical to finding out how these initiatives tackle the threat of paramilitarism in their community, is finding out what exactly it is they do. What are the physical tasks that they undertake as part of the initiatives? Has the progress and success of the initiatives suffered due

to the Covid-19 pandemic? And perhaps most importantly, what is the long-term goal for the initiatives? Finding these various answers provides an understanding of the nature of these organisations and also provide a scale, against which the success of these initiatives can be measured in the future. To find out this information, interviews with the various stakeholders were used, as well as with elite members of society from outside the community. Furthermore, for future research, once the aims of each of the initiatives are realised, then their success can be compared beside the completion of these aims in years to come.

*2. To what extent does CIT fulfil the criteria for community-based DDR as they have been identified in the literature?*

#### Criteria 1: Peacebuilding

This chapter has already identified that the literature proposes three key criterions of successful community-based DDR, the first being that it includes peacebuilding. Although measuring the effectiveness of these grassroots initiatives proved to be impractical, the researcher did find literature which indicated characteristics of successful grassroots peacebuilding. Alluded to earlier in this paper, Skarlato et al. (2013) speaks to 120 peacebuilding grassroots initiatives in Northern Ireland. Their findings produce five key elements of grassroots peacebuilding, which will be developed further in the next chapter. The researcher measures the CIT initiatives against these five key elements. This provides clarity, not only on whether the CIT programme includes peacebuilding or not, but on the standard of which it is implementing this element of community-based DDR.

#### Criteria 2: Address root causes of violent conflict

Addressing root causes of violent conflict is the second criterion which the literature deems important in successful community-based DDR. ‘Root causes’ refer to lack of, socio-economic capacity, community safety and community participation. This research investigates to what extent CIT addresses these issues within the chosen communities.

#### Criteria 3: Combatant and broader war effected community involvement

The final criterion portrayed as necessary for the success of DDR is the participation of ex-prisoners and former combatants. If combatants are not participating in these initiatives, then it is vital for this research to understand what are the reasons for this. This can be investigated throughout the interview process with stakeholders in the initiatives, as well as speaking to other members of society from outside the specific communities. Understanding what stands

between these ex-combatants and their successful reintegration and reconciliation can provide clarity on what more needs to be done toward securing a positive peace.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Community-Based Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration

To understand the continuation of these paramilitary factions, one must become familiar with the process of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR). DDR is common practise for state and non-state armed actors when forging a peace agreement, as it dampens the possibility of a return to violent conflict. According to Muggah and O'Donnell (2015) a major challenge of contemporary DDR programmes is not only to bring an end to direct violence and negative peace, but also to contribute to positive peace. This makes reference to the work of Johan Galtung, whereby a negative peace is that where there is an absence of violent conflict, and a positive peace is that where there is a cessation of structural and cultural conflict, along with the absence of violent conflict (EnvisionPeaceMuseum, 2012). Contemporary DDR processes have transformed over the past 20 years, the focus of early DDR programmes revolved around security and conversion of post conflict societies. The so called 'second wave' evolved to a broader focus that included peacebuilding, socio-economic and political capacity building and stabilisation along with the understanding that the specific context of these post conflict societies needed to be taken into account (Molloy, 2013). This section explores the current academic debate around this second wave in DDR. Molloy (2013) and Astrom and Ljunggren (2016) make a similar argument in the debate, that there has been a direct evolution of DDR theory in the past 20 years, where the emphasis has shifted toward bottom-up approaches to reintegrating ex-combatants through a community-based approach, that looks to address 'root causes', with specific consideration given to community security. These root causes being community-based, such as a lack of socio-economic and political capacity within communities, similar to the argument of Molloy (2013), and furthermore, an absence of community participation (Astrom & Ljunggren, 2016).

Another important shift in DDR programmes is related to concerns about lack of community participation in earlier programmes. Molloy (2013) states that a necessary end state for DDR is community safety. Furthermore, the DDR process should be linked to community safety initiatives, thus necessitating community involvement in the DDR programme (Molloy, 2013). 'Community-based DDR' in the context that Molloy (2013) uses it implies the project targets both the ex-combatant and the broader war-affected communities and actively involve the communities in the assessment, design and implementation. Astrom and Ljunggren (2016) similarly argue that the community itself must be put in the driver seat for, specifically, the re/integration process that should include all population segments in a community after the end

of a conflict, not only combatants. Asiedu (2010) identifies that a higher level of community participation in the planning and implementation of community-based programmes enables social reintegration of ex-combatants. In Mozambique, it was the militias that caused the havoc in the communities and stunted the overall development of the area, leaving the wider community thinking; ‘Why should they be given special treatment, through socio-economic capacity building, and not us?’ Propagating that, programmes where community participation is non-existent, leads to resentment amongst the community, thus the programme not reaching the extent of its potential (Asiedu, 2010). Carranza-Franco (2014) found that one of the biggest problems with the reintegration process in Columbia was that they neglected using municipal institutions and, furthermore, community-based organisations (CBOs) when attempting to build sustainable state capacity from the bottom-up. The bottom line in this debate is the critical need for more community-based, community security as well as fully participative implementation to develop the synergy of bottom-up support for DDR (Molloy, 2013). Many interveners consider civil society an important entry point for their programmes to facilitate community participation, and more specifically, community-based NGOs (Klem et al. 2008). This thesis aims to explore to what extent CIT adopts the essential criteria of community-based DDR explained here.

## 2.2 Civil Society and Grassroots Peacebuilding

### 2.2.1 Civil Society and DDR

The basic idea of civil society is that it is an arena of voluntary, uncoerced, collective action around shared interest, purposes and values (Paffenholz, 2010). It consists of a huge variety of mainly voluntary organisations and associations that maintain different objectives, interests and ideologies (Paffenholz, 2010). Klem et al. (2008) define it as “a multiform entity of human relations, comprising formal and informal institutions, organisations, networks, groupings or individual actors at all levels of society that aim to protect or extend their interests, ideologies and identities. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) or NGOs are a salient sub section of civil society (Klem et al. 2008). Nso (2020) explores the role of civil society in peacebuilding and states, firstly, how CSOs have a key role to play in DDR. Nso (2020) proceeds to explain how the role of civil society in DDR has prompted some experts to seek the connotation 3D4R- demobilisation disarmament, destruction of weapons, reinsertion, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconciliation.

Some of these perspectives emphasize how civil society can also play an important role in contributing to positive peace and reconciliation. That is why this thesis will particularly focus

on the role of civil society organisations. Exploring the role of civil society in peacebuilding in Mozambique, Colvin (2007) found that civil society importantly contributed to demobilisation and reintegration through income generating and skill training programmes, and also family- and community-level interventions that allow for the acceptance and reintegration of ex-combatants. Interventions such as these used as indicators toward what to look for from the grassroots initiatives involved in CIT.

Klem et al. (2008) identify four ways in which NGOs are involved in the DDR process: “-international advocacy towards better DDR policy and practice; implementation of DDR activities; administration and guidance of other DDR implementers by interlocutors; and complementary activities, which contribute to DDR though they are not part of the formal DDR programme”. Additionally, Klem et al. (2008) identify the categories of NGOs which are: brokers, interlocutors and capacity builders; international service providing NGOs; national service providing NGOs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs). CBOs are community-level organisations that largely help their own locality by delivering services, mobilising external aid or representing their communities towards people not from the local area (Klem et al. 2008). Under the four categories of NGO involvement, the CIT programme would be classed as ‘implementation of DDR activities’ and uses the ‘CBO’ category of NGOs for the implementation of their programme. This research explores to what extent CBOs contribute to the community-based DDR process.

### 2.2.2 Grassroots Peacebuilding

This thesis analyses the role of grassroots initiatives that are a part of the CIT programme, to identify to what extent they aid community-based DDR. As mentioned above, peacebuilding is now seen as a necessary element of community-based DDR, hence, analysing the programmes peacebuilding performance can relate to the extent that the CIT programme fosters community-based DDR. Lederach (1997), one of the leaders in the field of peacebuilding, accentuates the importance of a comprehensive and integrative approach to peacebuilding. He suggests a mechanism of multi-level participation where actors on all levels (top/elite, middle, and grassroots) are actively involved in the peacebuilding process (Lederach, 1997). In Lederachs (1997) summation, the broad definition of peacebuilding is “efforts to transform potentially violent social relations into sustainable peaceful relations and outcomes”. Another prominent player in the field of peacebuilding, Johan Galtung, whom many refer to as the father of peacebuilding, defines peacebuilding as, “an endeavour aiming to create sustainable peace by addressing ‘root causes’ and eliciting indigenous capacities for peaceful management”

(Bhandari, 2014). Bhandari (2014) describes peacebuilding as a “holistic, collaborative and long-term process in post conflict or war-torn societies”, similar to Lederach (1997), Bhandari (2014) states that peacebuilding takes place at the top, middle and grassroots levels. This thesis concentrates on the grassroots level of peacebuilding as this is the level which CIT operates. The development of local grassroots peacebuilding has, in the last 20 years, attracted increased interest, both scholarly and practically (Mitchell & Hancock, 2012). Lederach (1997) defines grassroots peacebuilding; “the interventions; initiatives carried out by civil society organisations and other non-state actors to support the emergence of an environment for settling conflicts are called grassroots initiatives in peacebuilding”. Mitchell and Hancock (2012) anecdotally mention Father Roberto Layson, an NGO worker in the Philippines, who made the argument that the peace process occurs in two arenas, horizontal and vertical. Vertical refers to the governmental level, where the initial peace talks occur, and horizontal is peacebuilding within and among the community on the grassroots level (Mitchell & Hancock, 2012).

Official conflict resolution agreements, for example the GFA, typically include a power sharing agreement between the leaders, which often happens at the top level between elites (Khoury & Ghosn, 2018). The issue with these agreements is that they don’t necessarily acknowledge the people that the leaders represent, which can result in instability and, in some cases, a return to violent conflict (Khoury & Ghosn, 2018). Therefore, Khoury and Ghosn (2018) state that solutions need to be found to the issues that led to the conflict, but also address the relationships at the local level, and furthermore, more research is needed to understand how grassroots peacebuilding and national level peace-making affect each other and can contribute to a sustainable peace. This refers to the ‘root causes’ mentioned numerous times in this chapter. Mitchell and Hancock (2012) add to this debate with a similar outlook stating that grassroots initiatives can contribute to national level peace-making, and vice versa, peace-making at a national level provides opportunities for grassroots peacebuilding. Consequently, a community-based DDR programme with a strong grassroots peacebuilding element might have the potential to realise community rapprochement, where national-level efforts have fallen short.

Skarlato et al. (2013) highlights at the importance of building relationships, cooperation and trust, when it comes to successfully implementing grassroots initiatives, in relation to peacebuilding. Parallel to political and institutional cooperation, grassroots initiatives have paved the way for improved contact between the feuding communities in Northern Ireland. The work of grassroots initiatives can promote relationship building, goodwill and trust (Skarlato,

et al. 2013). Khoury and Ghosn (2018) research grassroots peacebuilding in Syria and they find that one of the biggest issues in relation to peacebuilding is the gap between the grassroots level and the government in Syria, they claim that to reach effective reconciliation, cooperation between these levels must be increased. Grassroots initiatives in the areas of development and reconciliation are of the utmost importance to sustaining peace as they reflect ownership and control of the process as well as allow sensitivity to the different local needs and concerns that are suffering most (Khoury & Ghosn, 2014).

Skarlato et al. (2013), explore the experiences of 120 grassroots actors in the area of peacebuilding, and her findings produce five key elements of successful grassroots peacebuilding. The five key elements are as follows; 1) A necessity to develop significant relationships between multiple levels of social interaction; 2) The need for external financial assistance to be appropriately targeted and effectively distributed, ongoing collaboration between funding agencies and communities so as to develop appropriate funding mechanisms; 3) Ensure the sustainability of the peacebuilding process; 4) The need to address both the immediate effects of violent conflict and the underlying conflict dynamics that give rise to social tension i.e., trauma passed down, socioeconomic inequality, unemployment, cultural narratives, symbolism and access to education; 5) The usage of multiple strategies that are both linked to broader peacebuilding goals and directly relevant to local needs (Skarlato et al, 2013). Bhandari's (2014) research on grassroots peacebuilding in a post-conflict Nepal identifies grassroots initiatives as necessary and obvious for a durable peace. However, they need support in three critical areas: expansion of peace education as part of civic education at the grassroots level; promoting social harmony through social engagement, mobilisation and reconciliation; and utilising both traditional and modern mechanisms of conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Bhandari, 2014). Udovyk's (2017) research provides another interesting insight into the effectiveness of grassroots initiatives in Ukraine. It offers an empirical qualitative description of dynamic activities in the grassroots initiatives for sustainable development (Udovyk, 2017). The techniques used by Udovyk (2017) in relation to his data collection on grassroots initiatives can be adopted for this research and are further explained in Chapter 3. The aforementioned debates on grassroots peacebuilding are used in this thesis to determine the likely success of CIT as a grassroots peacebuilder. Moreover, these findings correlate to the extent of which CIT realises community-based DDR, as peacebuilding is now viewed as an integral part of the DDR process.

### 2.2.3 Grassroots Peacebuilding in DDR

This chapter has already identified the importance of CBOs in the DDR process. Furthermore, the role CBOs play can be referred to as community-based DDR. CBOs are the implementers of grassroots initiatives; thus, grassroots initiatives have a role to play in the implementation of community-based DDR. Klem et al. (2008) finds that whilst grassroots initiatives involvement in disarmament is limited, or indeed absent, they participate more prominently in demobilisation and play a significant role in socio-economic reintegration.

Avoine and Duran (2018) research how a grassroots initiative used in Colombia, 'toys for reconciliation', is used in the DDR process. They found reintegration policies should offer better possibilities for the demobilised population to become involved in productive projects organised by CBOs. Furthermore, grassroots DDR programmes should enhance the knowledge and competencies of the demobilised people; policies should orient initiatives toward creativity, as it is an effective tool for reconciliation; and more support should be given toward strengthening local initiatives (Avoine & Dunne, 2018). Mozambique, as mentioned earlier in this chapter offer excellent examples of programmes that provide financial assistance and job market information while promoting integration into the local community. This was made possible through their Reintegration Support Scheme (RSS) and Information Referral Service (IRS) managed by the UN (Edloe, 2007). Cash disbursements and assurance of financial support were provided over a period of 18 months to demobilised soldiers, with the hope that throughout this time period they would find employment and integrate into the local community. Astrom and Ljunggren (2016) discuss social re/integration and describe it as a process which community members', by dense social interaction, or exchange, increase their social capital. All stakeholders need to be involved in the re/integration process and assume complementary roles in structuring a more cohesive society, including CBOs through grassroots initiatives (Astrom and Ljunggren, 2016).

Rolston (2007) states that successful DDR involves the political will all of all parties involved, and the participation of the ex-combatants in their own programmes. This sentiment is repeated time and again in the literature referring to DDR. Kilroy (2011) conducts a study that uses participation as a way for assessing reintegration programmes. De Greiff (2010) states, in his paper on the link between DDR and reparations, if the primary goal of DDR programmes is to improve security by averting the marginalisation of potential spoilers to the peace process, then it may be better achieved by means of processes that contribute to the reintegration of ex-combatants. Lotscher (2016) found that social reintegration activities play just as important a

role in the reconciliation process as economic reintegration projects. Willems and Van Leeuwen (2016) mirror this thought; “reconciliation, defined as a process of dealing with past violence and restoring relationships in society, is deeply interconnected with social reintegration, to the extent that social reintegration may fail if reconciliation is not taken into account.” Underlying processes that mediate the influences between former combatant reintegration and reconciliation are communication, cooperation, mutual respect, trust and social cohesion, these are tenets of social capital (Bowd, 2008, Lotscher, 2016). Social capital, can be viewed as the linking concept between social reintegration and reconciliation (Bowd, 2008) Moreover, former combatant reintegration activities should be viewed as a chance to contribute to the entire society and the general reconciliation process (Lotscher, 2016). Economic reintegration doesn’t promote reconciliation, however, economic and social reintegration are interconnected, as failing economic reintegration may have a large impact on social reintegration (Bowd, 2008, Willems & Van Leeuwen, 2016). Thus, both social and economic reintegration must be viewed as equally important for the reconciliation process, with emphasis to be put on building social capital. Complimenting the work of Nso (2020), Willems and Van Leeuwen (2016) explain that reconciliation is part and parcel of the DDR process. When the initial DDR programme is completed, which deals with securing a negative peace, a wider DDR process continues that focuses on securing a positive peace through reintegration and overall reconciliation (Willems & Van Leeuwen, 2016).

These studies are all members of the same debate conflict in studies: What is needed to ensure DDR is reconciliatory in nature? This research adds to this debate by further investigating how grassroots initiatives, as part of the CIT programme, realise community-based DDR in Northern Ireland. Once the operationalisation of the CIT programme is identified, and the extent to which it contributes to community-based DDR is realised, the findings are then used to measure the reconciliatory nature of the CIT programme, and provide further recommendations as to where CIT can improve the overall reconciliation process.

### 2.3 Themes for Tackling Paramilitarism

The CBOs that implement the CIT programme do not exist in a vacuum; they are inextricably linked to events at all levels in Northern Ireland. Referring back to the societal relevance section in Chapter 1 of this paper, McFarlane (2011) highlights how grassroots initiatives are only as strong as the community as a whole. Hence, determining whether one, or even eight, community-based organisations within Northern Ireland’s civil society are effective at tackling paramilitary activity is illogical. Rather, this research has identified three significant strategies

that are deemed necessary to use by grassroots initiatives when tackling paramilitary activity;  
1) Building 'Community Autonomy'; 2) Using 'Diversionary Techniques'; 3) Applying  
'Generational Work'. These themes are explored in greater depth in Chapter 4.

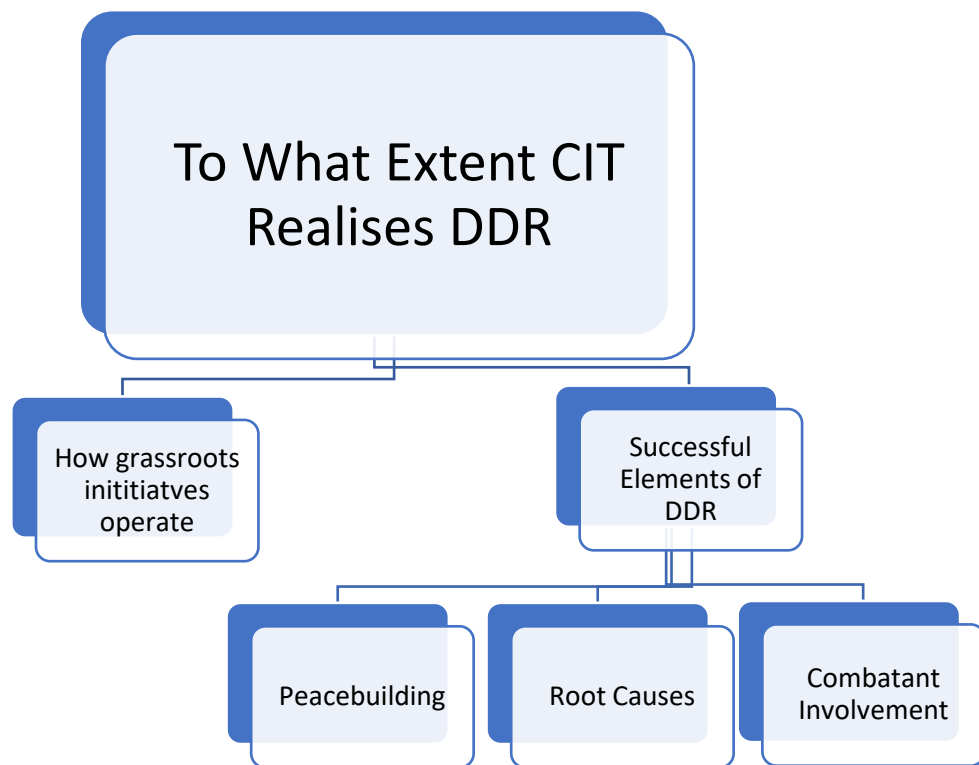
### 3. METHODOLOGY, METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

#### 3.1 Research Selection

On 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2015, after 10 weeks of negotiations between the five main political parties in Northern Ireland and Irish and British governments, the Fresh start agreement was concluded (Affairs, nd). This signified another significant step toward normalising politics and society in Northern Ireland. As alluded to in Chapter 1, Fresh Start contains a plan to end paramilitarism and organised crime in Northern Ireland (Affairs, nd). There are two main approaches in the action plan. The first is, 'Promoting Lawfulness and Tackling Criminal Activity', which considers the important law enforcement aspect of the work, whilst also promoting lawful society (justice-ni.gov.uk, nd). The second approach is the setup of a Communities, Transition and Learning delivery group which advises on delivery and brings together departments, statutory bodies, voluntary and community sector representatives and academic experts (justice-ni.gov.uk, nd). Under the latter approach the Communities in Transition (CIT) programme was developed.

The CIT programme focuses on eight communities in Northern Ireland that are under the influence and coercive control of paramilitary groups. These communities are North Down, West Belfast, East Belfast, Shankill, Derry, Carrickfergus and Larne, North Belfast and Lurgan (cooperationireland, nd). It is an innovative programme which aims to build capacity in these eight geographic areas. In each of these geographic areas there are a number of grassroots initiatives being implemented (cooperationireland, nd). Initially, one grassroots initiative was to be chosen from each of the eight geographic communities to analyse the techniques and methods used for the implementation of their initiative, and furthermore, understand how they intend to help combat paramilitarism in their community. This was to achieve a wide scope of the communities involved. However, this was not achievable due to a number of factors relating to social restrictions as a result of Covid-19. Seven grassroots initiatives were interacted with from six different communities. The researcher reached out to initiatives in the remaining two communities, but unfortunately received no reply. These grassroots initiatives, as part of the CIT programme, act as a sample case study in this research to firstly, add to the under researched field of how grassroots initiatives contribute to ceasing paramilitary activity within communities, and furthermore, answer the main research question; to what extent does the programme realise community-based DDR? (See figure 3.1)

**Figure 3.1,** Visual Representation of the Research



### 3.2 Data Collection

Firstly, the roles of these different grassroots initiatives were investigated. Similar to Udovyk’s (2017) and Butler and Hogg’s (2018) research on grassroots initiatives, qualitative research was completed in the form semi-structured interviews. Secondary research was also undertaken for each grassroots initiative. These interviews involved finding out the initiative’s overall techniques and goals, how they intend to achieve these goals, and within what time frame. A total of 14 semi structured interviews were conducted throughout the course of the research. The scope of interviewees included members of the CBOs involved in CIT, as well as one CBO that was not involved in the CIT programme, professors, an ex-prisoner, a former combatant, a member of the PSNI, a representative from The Executive Office (TEO) (governmental body in charge of CIT), and a representative from Cooperation Ireland (organisation in charge of implementing CIT). This pool of interviewees provided a well-rounded, inclusive collection of information in relation to the chosen research topic.

Furthermore, the researcher visited three of the communities to sit-in to events that were part of the CIT programme. This provided a deeper insight into the operationalisation of these initiatives and afforded the researcher the opportunity to conduct interviews that would not have been previously possible. For example, with the ex-prisoner that was interviewed, he explained he would only meet in person, not via an online platform. The initial plan was to

visit all eight communities and witness a number of the initiatives, as well as spend a considerably longer period of time in Northern Ireland. Once again, restrictions as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic made this impossible.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Once sufficient data was collected via the semi-structured interviews, the transcripts were analysed two different ways. Firstly, as mentioned in the theoretical framework, one of the goals of this research is to assess the likely success of CIT as a peacebuilding programme, which contributed to determining whether CIT complements previous cases of community-based DDR. Discourse analysis was used on the collected data and significant data pertaining to these two factors (peacebuilding and wider community-based DDR) were extracted. Discourse analysis is a blanket term used for a variety of qualitative research approaches used in analysing the use of language in social contexts, in general, it examines the language further than the sentence to understand how it operates in a social context (Delve, n,d) Finally, both discourse and thematic analysis were used to produce a report on how grassroots initiatives tackle paramilitary activity. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Discourse analysis was used to identify words and concepts that the interviewees gave emphasised significance to. Themes were chosen as a result of their prevalence in the data, and their perceived significance as portrayed by the interviewees. The researcher constructed these themes after data collection was complete. Three main themes were identified, and the headings of these themes; community autonomy, diversionary methods and generational work, were used as they were prevalent phrases used by interviewees in relation to the nature of their work. The sub headings used under these themes were also derived from the discourse and thematic analysis and used to describe different aspects of the broader theme.

### 3.4 Research Plan

During the Months of March and April 2021 the first phase of this research was underway. In early March contact was made with a number of grassroots initiatives. The interviews were conducted between mid-March and July 2021. Subsequently, data was analysed. Within this period the researcher spent a month living in Northern Ireland, venturing to a number of the researched communities and attending a CIT event.

### 3.5 Challenges

As mentioned, a number of times already in this thesis. Covid-19 posed a considerable challenge for this research. The researcher intended to spend six months in Northern Ireland,

in the end was only able to spend a month. As a result of this, the majority of the interviews had been conducted via Zoom, an online app which facilitates meetings. Hence, the beginning of the research was conducted not in the field (physically). This proved difficult for coordinating interviews and attaining desired interviewees. This was made apparent from the month spent in Belfast, as significant interviews were conducted with two former combatants and a member of the PSNI. These interviews would not have been achievable via zoom, as said by the interviewees.

### 3.6 Biases

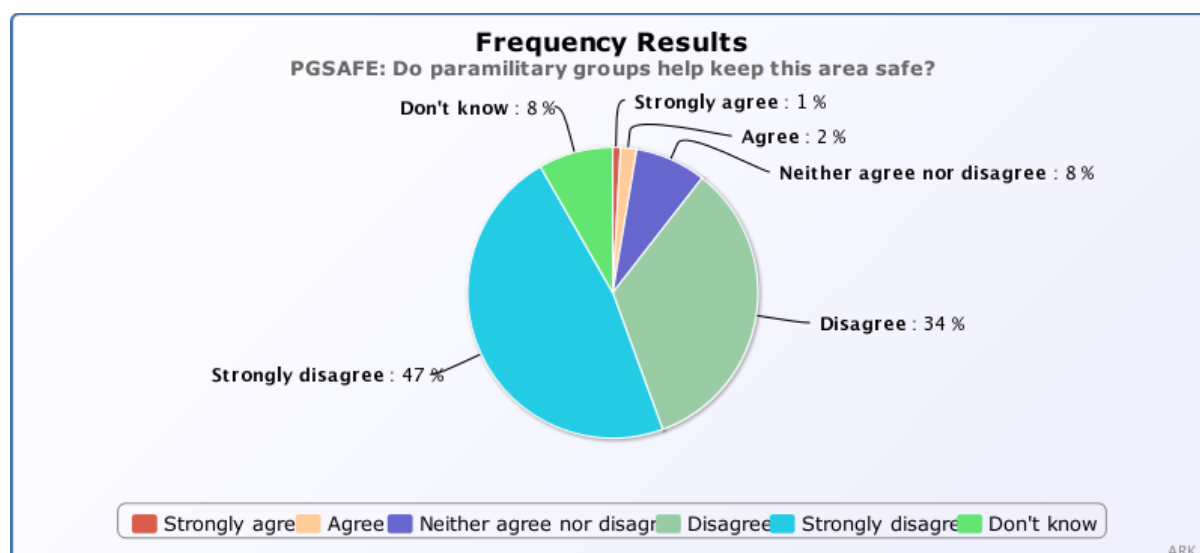
The researcher was raised in a Catholic household, and community, in the Republic of Ireland. Growing up in this atmosphere instils certain biases towards the situation in Northern Ireland. Biases would refer to a natural inclination to view the Republican, Nationalist, Catholic community more favourably. Although the researcher was aware of these biases at the beginning of the research, they had no impact on the collection or analysis of the data, mainly because they hold little relevance to the CIT programme being researched. The researcher was hesitant at first to venture into the Protestant areas to conduct field research, as I was uncertain to how I would be received. However, these uncertainties were quickly alleviated as the communities were extremely welcoming. The research was, if anything, enlightening to the researcher as well as eye opening to a culture i.e., Unionism and Loyalism, that the researcher previously knew very little about.

## 4. HOW GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES TACKLE PARAMILITARY ACTIVITY

### 4.1 Continuation of Paramilitarism and Creation of CIT

The Independent Reporting Commission (IRC) sees the continuation of paramilitarism, 23 years after the Good Friday Agreement, as an occurrence which is against the wishes of the people, without justification, and should end (IRC report, 2020). Box 1.1 represents the attitudes of the general population of Northern Ireland, and portrays wider societies disapproval toward the continuation of these groups, however, they are not completely disregarded. Furthermore, the continued existence of these paramilitary groups constitutes a clear and present danger on an ongoing basis, especially for the communities they operate in (IRC report, 2020).

(**Box 4.1** Do paramilitary groups keep this area safe? Devine, 2020)



One of the most important legacies from the ‘Troubles’ is the rise of complex and diverse Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries, which engage in acts of terrorism, organised crime and cross border activities (Jupp & Garrod, 2019). These groups continue to actively recruit new members, acquire money, weapons and explosives, and, even more worryingly, retain and develop their capacity for resuming violent campaigns in the future if necessary (Jupp & Garrod, 2019). All of the main groups that operated during the ‘Troubles’ remain in existence today. For the Loyalists there is the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), Red Hand Commando and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), and for the republicans there is the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) (Secretary of State, 2015). These longstanding factions continue to recruit, which really highlights the weakness of the demobilisation techniques which were implemented in Northern Ireland.

However, the biggest threat to peace does not come from these groups, instead it comes from dissident republican groups, who reject the Good Friday Agreement. They are the 'New IRA', Oglagh na hEireann and the 'Continuity IRA' (Secretary of State, 2015).

These paramilitary groups maintain a stronghold in the communities in which they operate. In 2013 the Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI) statistics branch show that there were 64 shootings and assaults from Republican dissidents, as well as Loyalist paramilitary violence directed at their own community, in 2017 this figure rose to 101, which shows a 60% increase (McDonald, 2018). This is evidence that the situation is worsening for the people of these communities. Many of the victims of these attacks were accused by Republican and Loyalist factions of criminal actions, such as drug dealing or car theft, without any form of legal representation or appeal (McDonald, 2018). Lecturer at Ulster University, Jonny Byrne, suggests that a web of underlying social issues plays a considerable role in the continuance of paramilitarism in Northern Ireland. Such issues are, high rates of unemployment, especially amongst urban male youth, which provides a steady supply of recruits for paramilitaries (Haverty, 2019). To add to this, the region is witnessing a rapidly growing drug problem which provides a ready-made target for republican groups, a way to legitimise their community policing, as *helping* their fellow Catholics (Haverty, 2019).

As a result of the abovementioned problem of paramilitarism and organised crime, a report was written, in 2016, dedicated the disbandment of these paramilitary groups, concluding that it is important take into consideration how, or when, society is prepared, legally, socially and politically to stop treating these remaining groups as paramilitary organisations and start treating them as organised crime gangs (Alderdice, McBurney & Williams, 2016). The point being made that paramilitarism and organised crime is so intertwined in a contemporary Northern Ireland, that to fully tackle paramilitary activity society must make the two distinguishable. In discussions with the groups that maintain the ceasefire, Alderdice et al. (2016) note that these groups have no desire towards a return to military campaigns, however the groups do acknowledge that community concerns need to be resolved politically and criminality must be addressed. In fact, it has been the dissident groups that have been the most active in terms of shootings, killings and bombings since the GFA (Horgan & Morrison, 2011).

As explained in Chapter 1, the Executive action plan for Tackling Paramilitarism and Organised Crime, under the Fresh Start Agreement, produced the CIT programme. The CIT programme particularly aims to address the continued coercive control of the paramilitary

groups within these communities. Lucy, CIT programme coordinator from Cooperation Ireland, the regulatory body that oversees CIT explained the policy approach behind the Executive action plan. It consists of two-tracks, the law enforcement side is the first track, it deals with making it more difficult for paramilitary gangs and paramilitary associated groups to operate, and reduce their capability to inflict harm. CIT is then the other side of the coin in relation to the action plan. CIT was developed as a strategy to build capacity within these communities to strengthen their grassroots response to create greater resilience and lessen vulnerability within the communities. Vulnerabilities within the chosen eight communities include drug addiction, unemployment, and education under-attainment. According to Lucy, the unique aspect of CIT is its capacity building model, rather than the usual service delivery model:

*“An awful lot of things essentially are a service delivery model. So, you provide the service for as long as the funding lasts, once the funding's gone, the service is called and the community is actually no better off for that, because essentially while somebody was being paid to do it, it happened, as soon as there's no funding for it to be done it doesn't”*

*(Lucy, Cooperation Ireland)*

How CIT operationalises its programme, is by working with the CBOs, residents and volunteers to upskill them so that they are capable of continuing the work of CIT after the funding period has ended. To realise this, Cooperation Ireland partnered with academics from the University of Ulster and Queens Institute of Conflict Research. These academics conducted fieldwork whereby they identified the eight communities as areas with the highest levels of paramilitary activity, as well as communities with the highest levels of socio-economic deprivation. Lucy explained that the results from the fieldwork, where the academic researchers asked community members about the enabling factors of paramilitary activity in their area, produced an array of interconnected issues. The initial societal areas of concern that were identified by the communities themselves were, young people, community development, community safety, health and well-being, restorative practices and art and culture (see Box 4.2).

CIT is funded by the government of Northern Ireland. Colin, from The Executive Office (TEO), the governmental and funding body of CIT, described how initially the funding period had been 18 months, however they upgraded this to a three-year funding cycle, which is unique for projects of this nature in Northern Ireland. This upgrade is to facilitate the sustainable approach

mentioned above and alleviate the pressure to deliver, which is placed on CBOs. He explained the reasoning behind this upgrade:

*“So maybe a longer-term delivery. People could be more strategic in their planning. There won't be this usual pressure that you have in budget cycles here of the end of March, start of April stuff out the door.”*

*(Colin, The Executive Office)*

Funding was not distributed evenly amongst the eight communities. Population density and the capacity of the CBOs in each community to deliver programmes were deciding factors on how funding was allocated.

**(Box 4.2 CITs Overarching Themes)**

CIT Themes	Art and Culture	Organisation of Festivals
		Film and Music Production
		Create positive representation of the communities
	Health and Well-being	Adressing Health Inequalities
		Signposting local services
		Providinig mental and physical health classes
	Community Safety	Educating the Community on Justice and Policing systems.
		Developing action plans for community safety
		Bettering relationships with the PSNI
	Restorative Practices	Offer training towards qualifications in restorative practices.
		Divert communities from seeking paramilitary justice
	Capacity Building	Upskill community members
		Increase employablity of commuiny
		Increase confidence
	Young People	Adress education under-attainment
		Set up homework clubs
		Improve young peoples aspirations

Using thematic analysis, the researcher identified three overarching themes from the interviews. Over the course of the interviews with CIT staff and other stakeholders, it became clear that the programme basically contributes to tackling paramilitarism through three overall strategies; 1) Creating autonomy within the CIT communities amongst the residents, 2) Introducing diversionary methods to the grassroots initiatives, with the goal of diverting community members from becoming involved in paramilitaries, or furthermore, seeking their help, and 3) Implement initiatives that are generational in nature, meaning the desired effect or benefit of the initiative may not be realised until a considerable length of time after the CIT programme has ended, by future generations. The reasoning behind implementing generational work is that many of the contributing factors to the continued coercive control of paramilitaries are deep-seeded societal issues, such as culture, education under-attainment and health inequalities, which take generations to fully reform. Altogether, this section helps answer the research sub-question; How do grassroots initiatives help combat paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland?

#### 4.2 Strategy 1: Building Community Autonomy

One of the unique themes that emerged throughout this research was the emphasis put on building community autonomy. According to the interviewees, programmes such as CIT would normally be thought up and parachuted in from the top-down. However, what makes CIT unique is that the community is involved in the decision-making process, in relation to what areas they want to see improved in their communities. Furthermore, the entire premise behind CIT, as Lucy alluded to in earlier in this chapter, is to build capacity within the communities to strengthen their resilience, so that when the funding ends for the CIT programme the communities are equipped to carry on the work, without outside help. Hence, increasing autonomy.

##### 4.1.1 Participant Led Decision Making

The interviewee from the health and well-being initiative being implemented in North Belfast explained how the initiative was set up around community involvement:

*“For mine (North Belfast community) there was four high level interventions or initiatives, which get a thousand pound each. And then there were six local smaller interventions and the way it was set up was to really get the community involved, and have them brought into it.”*

*(Interviewee, North Belfast, Health and Safety Initiative)*

Furthermore, the emphasis is not only based around the community being involved in the implementation, but also the design. Community members that would have considerable persuasion and power in the communities, such as youth leaders and community workers and various other residents took part in the design of the health and well-being programme in North Belfast. According to the interviewee, this is the key to getting the community to buy in to the programme.

A number of the events that were implemented as part of the arts and culture programme in Derry were completely designed and carried out by members of the community, without any outside help. One of the main ideas around the art and culture programme in Derry is to provide a positive representation of their community, which they did through making films, using music, art, and interviews. These were entirely participant led and implemented. Similarly, Jonny, programme coordinator for the Striving Toward a Restorative Society (STARS) initiative, which is run out of NI Alternatives in East Belfast, stated how one of the major strengths of their programme is its adaptability to suit the needs of the specific community. The STARS programme is carried out in all eight of the communities, however, instead of assuming one size fits all, in regards to implementation, each community is assessed individually and the community themselves lead the grassroots community development. The programme is flexible enough to respond to community needs, but the core aspect of educating the communities on restorative practices remains the same.

NI Alternatives also implements the community safety initiative in North Down, SAFE. Pete mirrors the importance that Jonny places on responding to the communities' needs. SAFE set up a diverse community forum, consisting of 15 members of varying backgrounds to get their opinion on how to keep the community safe. This tactic was used to provide as wide a scope as possible within the community, to ensure all needs are listened to. Pete described how the forum were tasked with developing the changes they wanted to see in relation to community safety:

*“Some of them are orange order members, and I know some of them are involved in community groups and some lead other community groups. And some are people who have never engaged. So, they would meet on a regular basis and identify key themes, seven things they wanted to do campaigns around making their community a safer.”*

*(Pete, North Down, SAFE Initiative)*

The themes which the community wanted to see turned into campaigns are wide ranging. Littering, road safety, mental health awareness, raising the awareness of services in the area, anti-social behaviour and pride in your community.

Just as the design and implementation of the individual grassroots initiatives were participant led, so too was the overall design of the CIT programme, which was explained at the beginning of this chapter. Lucy, of Cooperation Ireland, explained the decision to use the specific overarching themes that all the grassroots initiatives revolve around, was a result of academic researchers venturing into these communities and seeking the community's opinion on what areas they wanted to see developed. Professor Brendan Sturgeon, who was one of these academic researchers tasked with visiting these communities, defined how CIT is unique as a result of community involvement:

*“Rather than having top-down solutions being applied on the community, it's taking ideas from the community and seeing if they can have a partnership with statutory bodies, which I kind of like the idea of.”*

*(Brendan, Queens University)*

According to Brendan, the benefit of the programme is speaking to the communities and addressing issues in the consultation phase before moving onto the delivery phase. Another aspect of CIT which is unique is that it devoted 12 months to the consultation phase, to ensure the needs of the communities were listened to and developed upon, the usual consultation phase for other government projects is 10 or 14 days, according to Brendan. The insistence on community-led decision making and planning places the community in the centre of the programme, and grants them a certain amount of autonomy. Therefore, CIT is providing preparation for the future, with a view toward these communities being fully autonomous in regards handling these societal issues.

#### 4.1.2 Capacity Building for the Future

Whilst CIT is currently operating and will be, at least until this funding cycle runs out, the goal is to provide the community with the appropriate tools so that they can develop their localities autonomously. The 'champions' and 'befrienders' concept used in the North Belfast health and well-being initiative is a prime example. The initiative recruited 60 'champions' in North Belfast and upskilled them in areas such as addiction, depression, bipolar and schizophrenia, as well instilling them with knowledge on local service providers. They are now the go-to members of the community in relation to health and well-being, and are provided with skills

which hopefully they will use long after CIT has finished. STARS goal mirrors that of the health and well-being initiative, as it upskills and trains various stakeholders in the community, so that restorative practices are instilled in the community and develop further after the CIT programme has finished. Thus, decreasing the need for the community to seek the help of NI Alternatives and operate autonomously in the area of restorative practices.

*"So, its building a base of knowledge and awareness with stakeholders in the community. So, I know in East Belfast, for example, where I work, as we had one youth provider, they run youth clubs and mentoring in the program. We had a housing association. We have two residence groups. I'm in the community development association and then one-off trainings with PSNI and the Housing executives. So, it's kind of just a spread of different stakeholders in the community."*

*(Jonny, North Belfast, STARS Initiative)*

Jonny explained how the STARS programme consists of two phases, phase one was supplying the community members with a restorative practice's toolbox, through training the community members in different areas of restorative justice and practice, and then mentoring organisations on how to actually use what they have learned in everyday situations. Phase one has taken place. Phase two, which they were getting ready to move into at the time of this research, is about using the tools to embed restorative practices into the society. Embedding their work into the communities is of vital importance in reference to building community resilience for the future, and thus averting people away from the alternative, paramilitary justice:

*"I think it so they are equipped to know they have a voice in dealing with harm in the community and that the capacity raised to know that restorative approaches are viable and effective ways to repair harm in the community."*

*(Jonny, East Belfast, STARS Initiative)*

The researcher attended one of the STARS events NI Alternatives hosted in East Belfast. There were 12 participants in total, and workers from NI alternatives. All of the participants were from their own various youth centres and organisations. The event is part of an Open College Network (OCN) course, and allowed participants to achieve their level two in restorative practices. Once the participants receive their training, they return to their CBOs to implement what they have learned. This event was a perfect example of the grassroots initiatives trying to build capacity, with a view toward aiding community autonomy. Once the CIT programme is

finished and NI Alternatives have left, these participants can carry on what they have learned and create a ripple effect throughout the community.

The art and culture initiative in Derry is educating young people in skills outside of the usual subjects, in areas such as, technology, film making and coding. Their whole ethos revolves around improving the capacity of the community members, so that it transcends into a greater representation of the community in the future:

*"At Christmas we made a film, with a couple of hundred people. Santa loses his Mojo at Christmas, he comes to Creggan, see's all these artistic events, and then gets his Mojo back. We are trying to celebrate local people and talent in the local area."*

*(Gareth, Derry, Art and Culture Initiative)*

The SAFE initiative, in North Down, is working toward instilling an overall sense of trust for the police within the community, thus distancing the community from the coercive control of the paramilitary organisations. This, in turn, will strengthen the community's ability to independently safeguard their locality as well as developing collaborative relationships with government services in their community. According to Pete, changing this tide of general distrust requires building relationships with the police and the parole board, that will hold strong after the CIT programme has come to an end. How they are doing this is through school events, educating the young people on the negative aspects of paramilitaries, engaging with the PSNI, and facilitating relationship-building events between the PSNI and the local young people. Pete detailed how, going forward, it will increase community awareness and knowledge in the policing and justice system:

*"That will hopefully change policing and change the justice system and increase knowledge in it. What we want to see is a model where communities will work with police, they will get involved in community developments, and there will be that real sense of community."*

*(Pete, North Down, SAFE Initiative)*

TEO's representative, Colin was asked about TEO's physical involvement in the implementation of CIT. Colin made it quite clear that whilst they are not completely operating in the background, they are not directly involved in the delivery aspect of the programme. Colin emphasised how the programme is about ensuring there is a legacy, after the funding period has come to an end. Furthermore, it is about ensuring sustainable community empowerment, without needing the governments help:

*“It's one of the things that we think that goes right to the ethos of what Communities in Transition is about. It is about a community being empowered to own those projects and deliver them themselves. There has been this fear of the past of government departments or other regional organizations parachuting something in, funding runs out, and then they bail. Because we personally chose to invest our time and effort and money, really, and in organisations that will be within those communities, long after CIT has gone to make sure that there's a legacy and sustainability.”*

*(Colin, The Executive Office)*

#### 4.2.3 Community Involvement and Attainment as a Measurable

Measuring community involvement is a method used by CBOs, Cooperation Ireland and TEO to assess the effectiveness of some of the initiatives. The more training an individual has received, or the more individuals that have completed trainings can be noted, which can be directly related how much capacity has been built up in that community. The greater level of socio-economic capacity built within these communities can positively impact on that community's ability to become autonomous going forward. Thus, measuring community involvement in the CIT programme and attainment as a result of the programme, can also be a method to measure autonomy built in the community.

*"The measurable affects, again you can evaluate it on a monthly basis, how many people got involved? What training did they receive? Are they still involved a year later? How has it improved? It's very much soft outcomes sometimes because with mental health and physical health, you can't really measure if someone's mental health is better or worse but you would hope over a period of 10 to 15 years that you would see that there are less people with higher rates of depression, or mental health issues in those areas."*

*(Interviewee, North Belfast, Health and Well-being Initiative)*

Similarly, to the health and well-being initiative in North Belfast, Gareth, of the art and culture initiative in Derry, described how success is gauged through trainings and qualifications received within the community. If somebody receives a qualification or a result as part of their grassroots initiative, then that is a result. Pete stated that community involvement is the first measurement they analyse when investigating the effectiveness of the SAFE initiative. The more participants they have involved in the initiative translates into greater sustainability for community safety. With their initiative, the number of participants that have availed of the

programme results in greater collective knowledge on the justice and policing system within the community.

Colin was similarly asked what aspects they turn to measure the effectiveness of CIT in general:

*“So, what we are about is, trying to get more people actively involved within community work within those areas, increase that level of civic pride, ownership of issues, being solution-based and having the skills, capacity, and competence to be able to spot an issue or vulnerability. If they can't do something about it themselves, they know which part of the system to access to advocate for that sort of change. And that's really what we're looking to do is that whenever we have been delivering this for three or four years and starting to consider our exit strategy, but we want to see there's more, more voices, more people involved, better skills.”*

*(Colin, The Executive Office)*

Colin gave examples of a couple projects that they run in the communities of East Belfast and North Down on education attainment and that participation levels would be something they turn to. However, Colin acknowledged that other aspects of society need to be functioning in synchronicity:

*“What we would like to see then is over time, the level of participation increasing. But I will be absolutely categorical on saying that is not something that we can fix ourselves, we can pull our lever but there's a number of other levers that may be pulled at the same time.”*

*(Colin, The Executive Office)*

#### 4.3 Strategy 2: Using Diversionary Methods

From numerous interviews with various stakeholders, it was found that these CIT initiatives, rather than implement programmes that specifically deal with the issue of paramilitarism, they introduce programmes that use, what the interviewees called, ‘diversionary methods’. These are designed to focus the community members' minds elsewhere, as opposed to becoming involved in paramilitary activity. For example, the health and well-being initiative in North Belfast runs a clinic which helps drug addicts handle their addiction, which can result in less drug addicts in the community looking to buy off, or becoming indebted to, the drug pedalling paramilitary groups. The first aspect of this theme looks at the wide range of activities, such as the drug clinic, which CBOs use as diversionary techniques to steer community members away from the coercive control of paramilitaries. These activities, at first glance, may be interpreted as having no relation to tackling paramilitarism. However, it is the knock-on effect

of the initiatives that results in depriving the paramilitaries of oxygen. Finally, this section discusses how, as well as using diversionary activities, CIT also concentrates on diverting community members from seeking paramilitary help, as there is still a culture of respect toward paramilitary groups in many of these communities.

#### 4.3.1 Diversionary Work in Practice

In many of these disadvantaged areas topics such as art and culture or health and well-being are severely neglected. Many young people in these communities would never even be given the opportunity to pursue an avenue in music, acting or numerous other artistic expressions. Initiatives such as these enable the participants to discover a route in their lives, which they previously may have perceived unimaginable. Thus, diverting them from the more common route in the community, which would be criminality or paramilitarism:

*"For young people that may fall into hands of paramilitaries, either as targets or members, they may be failing in the school system. So, we are trying to figure out a way to get at them earlier in the school system, and provide them with alternative pathways. Maybe they don't need to be learning Spanish or French, and we are thinking about courses in gaming or computers and technology film making and music. As well as the essential subjects like maths and English. So, film making or music production or rapping, to try and inspire art and culture in the young people."*

*(Gareth, Derry, Art and Culture Initiative)*

Lucy also discussed the work that Gareth and Gasyard are doing in Derry. Promoting positive representations of the community through artistic means:

*"Whereas in terms of what Gasyard is doing by promoting and celebrating all of the positive elements that make Creggan a good place to live and a place that people want to live in. Like a couple of the films that they've done recently have really promoted and celebrated that. So, they did Christmas in Creggan video where there were loads and loads of different local organizations from schools."*

*(Lucy, Cooperation Ireland)*

The health and well-being initiative in North Belfast provides an outlet for the community members by producing a diverse range of activities, events and gestures for the community members. For example, a pumpkin patch was set up by local youth organisations, which entailed local children carving out pumpkins and placing them into a "magical pumpkin patch."

Additionally, an initiative was set-up whereby community members could choose other residents in the community to give gifts to, as a way of saying thank you for the hard work they do in the community, referred to as, “pick me up packs”. These events and initiatives were also accompanied by numerous other examples, such as media campaigns wherein a media company constructed social media adverts for a month that revolved around self-care, and a health summit which was more professional, geared towards organisations. As well as these events, there were ongoing health and well-being virtual classes such as yoga and exercise and the organisation signposted different services that there are in the community to help with issues such as debt, mental health and transport services:

*“Or there’s organisations like the men’s shed the addiction services, the mental health services, that are local to them. Again, it’s looking at people’s disposable income, do they have a car or transport? So, they don’t have to travel 15 miles. If you don’t have a car you may have to use public transport which might involve getting 3 busses. And we have volunteers that bring you to these places.”*

*(Interviewee, North Belfast, Health and Well-being Initiative)*

Gareth outlined how Gasyard was set up initially as a diversion for the local community, prior to CIT:

*"So, feile is initially a festival, covers a wide range of areas, music, drama, sport, community development. Been going 29 years, takes place every August. The festivals’ purpose is diversionary in nature. So, in August you have bonfires around internment, and the marches and parades so the festival is to divert people from anti-social behaviour."*

*(Gareth, Derry, Art and Culture Initiative)*

Gareth was asked, in relation to the CIT programme, about the relevance of art and culture, when it comes to tackling paramilitarism. He explained how it is about using art and culture to bring people together and using it as a diversionary tool, as well as helping to provide a positive representation of the community.

The initiative in North Belfast stated that it used methods that never acknowledged paramilitaries. In the interviewees eyes it would have been counterproductive, as the mention of tackling paramilitarism would, if anything, discourage community members. Not mentioning paramilitaries throughout the implementation of the majority of these grassroots initiatives appeared to be a vital tactic of the diversionary method:

*"It's really trying to make young people move forward using all these diversionary techniques and interventions and educating the population. Without being very blunt and saying 'we are here to stop you from getting involved in paramilitary organisations.'"*

*(Interviewee, North Belfast, Health and Well-Being Initiative)*

Lucy dissected the delicate balance between mentioning and not mentioning paramilitaries throughout CIT. The community's safety must always come first, however, if paramilitaries are never mentioned, then is CIT being true to what they are trying to achieve?

*"So again, it's not about the community tackling paramilitaries head on. It's much more about reducing the ground on which paramilitary organizations can operate because that was one of the things that we were very conscious of. And I think essentially there was a risk that we were asking people to put themselves in danger by getting involved in the program. That's not really a reasonable thing to be doing. Unless it's going to take attention all the way through, you know, in terms of how you promote and, and talk about the program. Because if you talk too much about paramilitaries, then nobody's going to want to be involved. But if you don't mention them at all, you're not really being true to what it is that you're actually trying to do. But essentially it is, it's much more about the softer end of tackling paramilitarism"*

*(Lucy, Cooperation Ireland)*

Similarly, Colin followed Lucy's logic. Terminology and contextual factors are issues in the separate communities and act as an obstacle if not dealt with delicately. Some of the communities involved in CIT would argue they don't have any operational paramilitaries, they would admit they have organised crime gangs, but not paramilitaries. Further highlighting the intertwined relationship between paramilitary groups and organised crime gangs. If representatives from TEO or Cooperation Ireland were to go from door to door asking residents if they wanted to help tackle paramilitarism, the response would have been a negative one, Colin explained. The reason for this is that these communities are very close-knit, and if tackling paramilitarism is mentioned, CIT runs the risk of referring to a resident's neighbour, cousin, uncle or sister etc. Further backing up the importance of using diversionary methods to tackle paramilitary activity within these communities. When talking about not mentioning paramilitaries, Brendan explained how CIT is only one aspect of a wider action plan. It is the PSNI's job to deal with the criminality facet of paramilitarism, whilst CIT works on diverting community members from their coercive control:

*"I suppose, is thinking about where to support transition in the community and you can choose multiple things you can do here, but I actually think that the approach is a sensible one and it makes sense. You try to support, transition. I mean, it's not sitting around, you know, talking about paramilitarism and criminality and the history. I mean, that's part of it. You know, we need education, it can't be that alone. We're getting people in employment that is a bait to get people to volunteer.*

*(Brendan, Queens University)*

#### 4.3.2 Diverting from Seeking Paramilitary Help

The restorative justice initiative, which is being implemented in all of the eight communities, offers slightly different diversionary techniques. Rather than producing physical activities as a way to keep people from joining paramilitaries, it educates people on restorative justice and restorative practices, and highlights it as a suitable alternative to seeking paramilitary help, thus diverting the community from the paramilitaries coercive control:

*"As you know, historically here, quite often if something happens in the community, it's a phone call and sometimes the first phone call is to maybe a paramilitary organization as opposed to the police, but we have given an option to show how people in the community, who work in the community, live in the community, they can be enabled to repair harm when it occurs, instead of making that phone call, how can we host a mediation? Can we have a non-violent approach to repair harm? So, that's it at the core."*

*(Jonny, East Belfast, STARS Initiative)*

Under the same organisation (NI Alternatives) as the STARS programme, is the community safety project which is being implemented in North Down, SAFE. Similar to how the STARS programme educates the community on restorative practices, SAFE diverts people away from paramilitaries by teaching them about the policing and justice systems. The majority of young people in the community would turn to paramilitaries as opposed to the police. In 2015, NI Alternatives held an event which revolved around 'confidence in policing'. Over 100 young people attended the event, and Pete noted that their findings from that event showed that 70% of young people would go to the paramilitaries for help, or handle it themselves, rather than going to the police. There is a lack of trust in both the policing and justice systems, paramilitaries are seen as the more viable option:

*"And then you ask the question, why would you go to the paramilitary group and not the police? And then the response back is often, well, because we believe with the paramilitary group it will be justice, it would be more transparent and be more fitting to what happened. And it will be quicker in the sense that it doesn't have to go through prosecutions and investigations. This man did this to me, he stole this amount of money, or maybe said he was going to do this work to my house and he didn't do it and whatever."*

*(Pete, North Down, SAFE Initiative)*

The work that SAFE is doing is about educating general population on the policing and justice systems as well as being more direct with the young people and teaching them about the consequences of their choices. Embedding certain principals in the young people's minds such as not buying drugs or counterfeit gear from paramilitaries if they really want them to cease to exist:

*"And if you do that, then they won't have the oxygen that they need to still be here in ten or 15 years. So, we're saying to young people, well, the issue is actually in your hands and you can play a massive part from them having their boot on the neck of the community."*

*(Pete, North Down, SAFE Initiative)*

The SAFE programme also engages with the older people in the community and set up a forum. Through this they identified key themes, seven areas that the community wanted to do campaigns around to make the community safer, which they are currently carrying out. These were previously alluded to under theme 1, community autonomy. Keith, a PSNI neighbourhood officer in the same community that SAFE operates, spoke of all the work that is being carried out to build relationships between the PSNI and the community so that they are seen as a more viable option to turn to:

*"So, we would have gone and applied for funding, for the likes of tackling paramilitarism. I applied for 700 pounds of funding and they give me 100 credits. So that is dealing with young kids, we do gaming and pizza nights. So later on, I may see those same kids in volatile situation, where they are standing there drinking, and I call one of them over, and say go away from there, old people live there. And they do. And then that gets passed on when they become parents."*

*(Keith, PSNI, North Down)*

However, the situation is far from straight forward within these communities. These paramilitaries hold considerable sway over what happens in these communities, Keith explains, and for the mean time, you have to try to work with them. In many situations, if the paramilitaries don't want something to happen within the community, it won't happen. One of Keith's main responsibilities as a neighbourhood officer is to act as a buffer between the paramilitaries and the PSNI. Keith explained local peoples lack of trust in the justice system. He provided an anecdote of a local dispute over money, had it gone through the justice system little would have been done over a long period of time. The paramilitaries were seen as a more viable and just alternative:

*“There is an example of a guy who had an Indian restaurant down in Bangor, and a plumber went down and did work for him and it was 1500 pounds worth of work. When he went to get paid the guy that owned the restaurant said I'm not paying you. So that guy was owed 1500 pounds, and materials were 600 pounds. So, he rang the paramilitaries and they gave him 600 cuid and they went down to the Indian restaurant and said, “see that 1500 cuid, it's 5 grand now” and set a gun on the counter, you have till Tuesday. And he paid it.”*

*(Keith, PSNI, North Down)*

Whilst initiatives such as STARS and SAFE are working toward diverting people from seeking paramilitary help in solving local disputes, it is not something that grassroots initiatives can do on their own as there are clearly

shortcomings in the policing and justice systems that conversely divert people toward seeking paramilitary help.

#### 4.4 Strategy 3: Applying Generational Work

One of the more prominent themes that became evident during the research was that most of the grassroots initiatives which are being implemented through the CIT programme are generational in nature. Many of the interviewees shared the opinion that the effects of the work that is being carried out now, may not be witnessed for 10 or 20 years, or in some cases longer. This section identifies why the work is generational in nature. Subsequently, a detailed description is provided on what generational work looks like in practice.

##### 4.4.1 Why is it Generational?

The interviewee from the health and well-being initiative in North Belfast, described how there is no rushed solution when tackling issues such as health inequalities:

*“Like anything else health inequalities take one to two generations to change. Probably the long-term goal is to reduce health inequalities, improve the life expectancy, which is the big one in those areas of deprivation, to be more in line with the normal. In Northern Ireland the last stats were females lived to 82 or 83 years and males lived to 79 or 80. But in areas such as North Belfast in New Lodge and Ardoyne and in fact in any of those areas of high deprivation, it’s probably 6 to 7 years younger. It would be that bad.”*

*(Interviewee, North Belfast, Health and Well Being Initiative)*

The interviewee explained that whilst the overall long-term goal is to lessen paramilitary activity in the community, they have a related long-term goal which is to increase life expectancy and furthermore, provide people with the opportunity to move out:

*“That takes generations to happen and millions of pounds. This initiative on its own is not going to work, you need it from the grassroots up.”*

*(Interviewee, North Belfast, Health and Well Being Initiative)*

When trying to instil qualities in young people and help them develop talents in areas such as art and culture, as well as health and well-being, it is not realistic to look for results in the short term. Gareth, similar to the interviewee from North Belfast, acknowledged that there is a longer-term initiative taking place, not solely got to do with tackling paramilitarism. It’s long-term investment in people to ensure people in the community have opportunities and life chances. Jonny, from the East Belfast STARS initiative, mirrored this generational outlook when it comes to societal change:

*“The measurables there for how successful we have we been in a year, I think that’s really difficult because most societal change needs to happen over generations, realistically, and culture shifts through time. The small kind of shift in the needle over time.”*

*(Jonny, East Belfast, STARS Initiative)*

In the area of community safety, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the faith of the paramilitaries is in the hands of the young people. They decide whether they go to local paramilitaries to buy drugs, or counterfeit gear. To implant that way of thinking throughout the entire community takes a considerable amount of time. It involves moving everyone in the community at the same time so that they trust the police and the justice system, which eventually will result in a more lawful society, Pete detailed. Communities will be kept safe

using restorative methods, not paramilitary violence, however, to make this change, Pete replicated Jonny's sentiment that it is the small shift in the needle over time.

In the past, solutions were parachuted into these communities and ceased once the funding did. Lucy acknowledged this and spoke of why a longer-term goal is necessary when it comes to tackling paramilitaries:

*“So, it's, it's not so much about, yeah statutory agencies or larger charities coming in and fixing problems for communities, but actually trying to build on that grassroots capacity so that over the longer period as concerted action that will reduce those vulnerabilities will kind of edge out the opportunity for paramilitary organizations to operate.”*

*(Lucy, Cooperation Ireland)*

Additionally, Lucy remarked on the inevitability of CIT being generational, and that the overall goal of tackling paramilitarism is not something that will be achieved in the three-year funding period. Likewise, Colin, from TEO, stated that paramilitaries cannot be fully tackled within the life cycle of CIT, especially not by itself. However, what it can do is increase the communities' capacity in the short term, which will have a positive impact on future generations:

*“And I think that over time, what we do need to do is consciously build people's capacity and confidence to get to a point by two or three or four- or five-years' time, yes, we are able to be a competent society, we are tightening our problems as a community.”*

*(Colin, The Executive Office)*

Brendan warned that, although the funding period is longer than the typical time allocated to funding of this nature in Northern Ireland, it is nevertheless difficult to inspire generational change in the window that is provided. The window of activity is considerably small due to the first phase being dedicated to consultation, and then, as a consequence of the funding period coming to an end, the final few months has people looking for jobs elsewhere which can have a negative impact on the way a project is completed.

This section identified the reasoning behind these initiatives adopting a generational outlook. Tackling health inequalities, such as life expectancy, in these deprived communities takes generations. One of the interviewees explained that addressing an issue such as life expectancy, involves improving the overall mental and physical health of the residents, which can steer them away from becoming involved in drugs or anti-social behaviour, which in turn, distances

them from the coercive grip of paramilitaries. It is societal change that many of these initiatives are striving toward, this takes generations. Altering residents' mindsets not to seek paramilitary help takes generations due to the complex history these communities have with the paramilitary groups. The Overall goal of CIT cannot be achieved within the allocated funding period, thus, this theme has a strong relationship with theme 1, building community autonomy. Many of interviewees alluded to the point that, the more autonomous a community becomes, the greater chance this generational work has of being realised.

#### 4.4.2 What does Generational Work Look Like?

The previous section explained why grassroots initiatives that seek to lessen the coercive control of paramilitaries need to adopt a generational outlook. This section details what this generational work looks like in practice. Consequently, this generational outlook makes it impossible to fully assess the effectiveness of these CIT interventions now, as it will be years before the expected success will shine through. There is a need to develop a stronger social economy in these communities. Lucy explained how community development in Northern Ireland is grant dependent. However, if a community member avails of an employability program, they can generate their own income. This is short-term change for the individual, but it will take a generation for this change to be applied to the community as a whole. Lucy pointed to a number of examples of various CBOs, such as sports clubs and uniform groups, such as the boys and girls brigade, whom are effectively self-funding. If CIT, through employability programmes, can enable small local businesses to be self-funding, then the social economy in these communities will strengthen over time.

The interviewee from North Belfast acknowledged that the most important aspect of bringing change to society is through education. However, altering people's mindsets in a traditionally divided society takes generations. For example, the interviewee talked about how Northern Ireland there is still has quite a lot of work to do in relation to the social acceptance of the LGBTQ community, particularly on the Protestant side, due to religious beliefs. Similarly, Catholics and Protestants are not accepting of each other's views and altering these mindsets cannot happen over the course of a three-year funding period. However, holding educational talks with young people in the schools and youth centres is how CIT sparks this change. Jonny spoke of how restorative practices have been a part of societies, worldwide, throughout history. Transitioning to a fully restorative society takes time but Jonny states that the work they do through mediation and training is the starting block:

*"But I think the more and more people we train and we have housing teams and organizations who now hold mediations between tenants. So historically, tenants are in this rut of conflict and tension and once that escalates, it's so hard for it to die away. So, we hope for it to be addressed in a healthy, non-violent way. And they can hold mediations to repair the harm, which is really very positive. How you quantify that is we've got loads of these stories about, you know, success stories, but in terms of hard data, I realistically think we're probably a bit early."*

*(Jonny, East Belfast, STARS Initiative)*

Before communities become comfortable holding mediations to repair harm, STARS upskills them in restorative practices, and affords residents the opportunity to receive a qualification in the field. It is the starting block to a more restorative society. Reforming a community into a more lawful and restorative one, similar to altering mindsets, is not feasible over the course of a three-year programme. Pete noted that values need to be instilled into young people where they become the norm and then in the future, are passed down to the next generation. However, whilst the work being done with young people is of the utmost importance, it needs to happen simultaneously with programmes that seek to educate the older generations within the communities. SAFE events that take place in the local schools educate the young people on how to deprive the paramilitaries of the ground which they need to operate, yet, when these young people arrive home after school, they are receiving a contradictory message from a friend or family member whom they love and admire, Pete explained. So, it is a combined approach that is needed, dealing with both older and younger people in the communities. Although three years is minimal in relation to the generational work that is being carried out in these CIT communities, Pete and most of the interviewees are grateful, as the typical implementation period for these projects was 18 months. With the SAFE initiative, these three years give them a chance to implant themselves in the young people's lives and develop relationships that can continue into the future:

*"So, it's usually 1 year in Northern Ireland, so this is actually great. We actually get a 3-year run at it, in terms of DARE we can say we are working with P7s now and we will be next year, and hopefully working with them throughout their lives. Whenever they are in first, second, fourth year, hopefully we will be there to experience everything. If they have a bad break up or pass an exam or a death in the family or learning how to drive. We can help them through all those things, good and bad. And help them be resilient."*

*(Pete, North Down, SAFE Initiative)*

Keith, from the PSNI, provided an example of himself, to show how generational work can shine through given time and consistency:

*“I have been stationed in Bangor for 27 years and community policing for 15. So, over the years people have got to know me. Instead of people talking to you and saying ‘officer’ or ‘constable’, we wear a name badge. It breaks down the barrier and lets people see you as a human being. Not just a police officer. Young people who are the kids of the people that were causing us issues 20 years ago are now the dads. And they say they remember you, and it takes a while to build that up.”*

*(Keith, PSNI, North Down)*

This highlights that educating the community and building relationships with the PSNI can have a positive effect in the future, underlining the importance of persisting with, and constantly improving these initiatives.

As mentioned previously in this paper, paramilitary activity and organised crime are inextricably linked. Brendan explained how the only way to tackle both is to follow the two-track approach of the Executive’s action plan, planting the seeds now for a better future:

*“I said it there earlier on, you're dealing with organized criminal gangs like it's the equivalent of asking in New York or London will you ever get rid of crime. And I think what you have to do is try and build up, like what the project is doing, to build up the enforcement response. And then you try and build up the community so that the community isn't as reliant on some of these groups that has more confidence in as well people, will, they already have more opportunities. They don't need to join paramilitary groups.”*

*(Brendan, Queens University)*

This section has highlighted important characteristics of implementing generational work. CIT is building a stronger social economy within these communities through employability programmes, which aid local business to become self-funding, which contributes to removing the culture of grant-dependency in these communities. Education is equally important. This is not limited to young people, but all demographics within these communities. The initiatives in the CIT programme researched in this thesis target both the younger and older populations, educating them on restorative practices, as well as the policing and justice systems.

Relationship building is another strategy used by the CIT initiatives. SAFE work to improve relationships between the community and the PSNI, and with persistence, these relationships can be strengthened which can result in a knock-on effect in future generations.

This generational work does not happen in vacuum. Generational work also needs to be carried out on the governmental level if a positive peace is to be achieved in Northern Ireland:

*"The problem has stemmed over the last 30 to 60 years, probably the last 30 years with the Troubles, they started in 69, there was an undercurrent that was there but it really kicked off in the 70's and you see that with the Provisional IRA, and now the real IRA and what have you. And then you have the peace process, Sinn Fein are now in parliament, the Deputy First Minister is Sinn Fein. There's a lot of work happening on that level even though on a personal level, Stormont and our Chief Executive are useless, but there is only so many people you can vote for. And it will be 30 to 60 years before that will change."*

*(Interviewee, North Belfast, Health and Well-being Initiative)*

## 5. TO WHAT EXTENT DOES CIT REALISE COMMUNITY BASED DDR?

The preceding chapter provided a detailed description of the strategies that are employed by CITs community-based organisations (CBOs), specifically, their grassroots initiatives, to help combat the coercive control of paramilitary groups within the researched communities. This chapter will use the findings from Chapter 4, as well as further data from the interview transcripts, and secondary research, to detail the extent to which CIT realises community-based DDR.

Disarmament and Demobilisation have officially been implemented in Northern Ireland as of 31 March 2011 (DDR in Northern Ireland - Review Panel in Northern Ireland, n.d). However, based on this research, the reintegration and reconciliation processes have been left lacking in Northern Ireland. The researcher questioned each of the interviewees on their perception of the reintegration process in Northern Ireland to date. Many of the CIT initiatives could only provide their opinion, others couldn't comment at all as they explained they were not equipped with the knowledge to give a detailed answer. Naturally, the ex-prisoner and former combatant could provide a more thorough description of how the process has unfolded to date.

Reintegration seems to be a complicated subject in these communities as it comes down to individual viewpoints. According to the interviewee from the North Belfast health and well-being initiative, the 80-90% of people who were not directly involved with the conflict would be aware of the ex-prisoner and former combatant in their community, and they would each have an individual opinion on what that ex-prisoner or former combatant has done, whether it being in favour of what paramilitaries have done, and continue to do, or they disagree with their existence and feel there is no place for them in their community, making whole societal reintegration or reconciliation difficult. Furthermore, there is an understandable, and perhaps necessary, lack of trust toward the paramilitaries alluded to by Pete, from the North Down SAFE initiative. He stated that this lack of trust acts as a hinderance to both, fully reintegrating former paramilitaries back into society, and providing them a participatory role in the grassroots initiatives. Pete explained why caution needs to be exercised:

*"I always worry about some of the restorative justice groups, that they have hoods by day, hoods by night. So, they would go down to meetings by day and talk a really good talk and then at night time they will be the leader of the paramilitary group. If something like that ever happened with Alternatives, then everything would be ruined because there would be no trust."*

*(Pete, North Down, SAFE Initiative)*

In addition to this lack of trust, this research has found that there are numerous other obstacles which stand in the way of former combatants, and to a greater extent, ex-prisoners being reintegrated into wider society. Since being released from prison, Colin from Charter NI has had to make difficult concessions and overcome numerous impediments:

*“It's been a struggle. It hasn't been the ex-prisoners or former combatants' problem. It's been the government that's been up on the hill. You know, the good Friday agreement was sold as it was sold. But then as we moved on, I mean, I disagreed with the Good Friday Agreement. I voted against it. But I'm a democrat and I have had to accept that and I've had to adapt to it. I don't hide that fact there's people alive today and probably I'm one who wouldn't have been alive without the Good Friday Agreement. I've no doubt about that. So, for that, I'm grateful. It has given us an opportunity to engage with people who we seen as our enemies. I don't see them as my enemy now, I see them as my political opponents”*

*(Colin, Charter Ex-prisoner Group)*

The main issue appears to be reintegrating back into wider society. Employability, and even attaining insurance are every day challenges for ex-prisoners, and is something that they have to manoeuvre around in whatever way possible. According to Colin, one of the first questions asked on a job application probes your criminal history, which leaves the interviewee with a conundrum, lie and get a job, or, tell the truth and remain unemployed:

*“I was in prison twice. I spent 10 and a half years in prison. I'm not going to criminalize myself. So, I say no to that (having a criminal record).”*

*(Colin, Charter Ex-prisoner Group)*

However, once the applicant reaches the interviewee stage, they are asked questions related to why they had been out of work for a number of consecutive years, which in turn leads to them stating they were imprisoned. On the word of Colin, the employers do not differentiate between criminal convictions and conflict-related convictions:

*““You put down in your application, that you have no criminal convictions” I don't have criminal convictions I just have two conflict related convictions. “You didn't ask me that question.” Well, and then the doubt sets in, thank you so much. You'll be hearing from us. Nine times out of 10, you don't hear from them, or you got a letter saying thanks for your interview.”*

*(Colin, Charter Ex-prisoner Group)*

Fascinatingly, and perhaps worryingly, Fra, a former combatant who operates the Teach na Failte ex-prisoner support group, mentioned briefly, these offences not only effect the individual but are being passed down to their sons and daughters, and in some cases grandsons and granddaughters:

*“If your daughter is going for a job, they ask have your mother or father ever been in prison for a political offence, or your grandparents? What the hell is that about? I can understand someone giving their all and then being treated the way they still are.”*

*(Fra, Teach na Failte Ex-prisoner Group)*

Lucy, of Cooperation Ireland acknowledged that society seems to have an ingrained impression of the ex-prisoner and former combatant, which may itself take generations to change. There is still a stigma around the ex-prisoner and former combatant community, which, according to Colin, is a result of a non-existent governmental reintegration and reconciliation process. Colin and Fra both shared the same sentiment that anything that has been done towards the reintegration of the ex-prisoners and former combatant community has been carried out by that community themselves, without government help. This chapter investigates where the, government-run, CIT programme realises community-based DDR, giving considerable weight to reintegration, which has been evidently neglected by the state in Northern Ireland.

The literature, as discussed in Chapter 2, provides an overview of the second-wave in DDR studies. This second wave places considerable importance on a bottom-up, community-based approach to the reintegration of ex-combatants. The contemporary focus of community-based DDR revolves around a number of factors including, peacebuilding, addressing root causes through socio-economic capacity building in the communities and wider community participation and security. Moreover, the literature makes reference, time and again, to the increased importance of ex-prisoners and former combatants participating in the reintegrating process, whether it be via implementation of initiatives or availing of an initiative. This chapter investigates to what extent the CIT programme, as a formal part of the DDR process, includes the aforementioned factors of community-based DDR.

### 5.1 Peacebuilding

Highlighted already in Chapter 2, Skarlato et al. (2013) identify five key elements to successful grassroots peacebuilding; 1) A necessity to develop significant relationships between multiple

levels of social interaction; 2) The need for external financial assistance to be appropriately targeted and effectively distributed, ongoing collaboration between funding agencies and communities so as to develop appropriate funding mechanisms; 3) Ensure the sustainability of the peacebuilding process; 4) The need to address both the immediate effects of violent conflict and the underlying conflict dynamics that give rise to social tension i.e., trauma passed down, socioeconomic inequality, unemployment, cultural narratives, symbolism and access to education; 5) The usage of multiple strategies that are both linked to broader peacebuilding goals and directly relevant to local needs. Furthermore, Bhandari (2014) detailed three critical areas where grassroots peacebuilding initiatives need support. There needs to be an expansion of peace education at the grassroots level, both traditional and modern mechanisms of conflict resolution should be utilised and social harmony, through engagement, mobilisation and reconciliation should be promoted. This section identifies which of these factors characterize the CIT programme.

#### 5.1.1 Significant Relationships and Promoting Social Harmony

When investigating the nature of the relationships between all the stakeholders involved in the CIT programme, the researcher posed the question to the grassroots initiatives; What are the relationships like with all the stakeholders? These included, The Executive Office (TEO), Cooperation Ireland and other statutory bodies, as well as participants, other community-based organisations and the PSNI.

Intra-community relationships are considerably important to the continued success of these grassroots initiatives. Pete, from the SAFE initiative in North Down discussed the significance of having open lines of communication with the multiple organisations that are also a part of CIT:

*"There are two other providers in North Down, Bryson and Tides training, they do the capacity building and Uhub that do the mental health project. Again, I would meet with them regularly to make sure there is no duplication of the projects. Making sure we can support each other, share information. I think we really all helped each other so far and hopefully it is the same in the next phase."*

*(Pete, North Down, SAFE Initiative)*

When speaking to NI Alternatives, Jonny made reference to their relationship with Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI), as they carry out the same restorative practices project, at opposite sides of the sectarian divide. Jonny, as project lead for NI Alternatives, would meet

with the programme manager from CRJI, to discuss strategy, and propose ideas for the betterment of the STARS initiative. Similar to Pete, Jonny spoke of his own community, East Belfast, and the relationships STARS has with other CIT organisations. He explained that there has been significant crossover between the participants of all the CIT initiatives that are taking place in the East Belfast community, which in turn feeds into wider participation. Gareth, speaking for the Gasworks Feile art and culture initiative out of the Derry community stated they too have positive relationships with the various other stakeholders:

*"Yeah, we do we have regular engagement with them regular updates. They have been good as situations rise, if we have to change course or respond to certain situations. So, it has worked."*

*(Gareth, Derry, Art and Culture Initiative)*

In each of the eight communities there are a number of different CBOs operating under the banner of CIT. Open lines of communication between these CBOs are essential to avoid possible duplications of work. The strong relationship between NI alternatives and CRJI shows, not only a good relationship between CBOs, but also a strong Catholic-Protestant relationship, which can open an avenue for cross-community work, which is important for reconciliation.

When questioning the multiple initiatives on their relationships with various stakeholders, it was the relationship with the state that was the most intriguing. Many of these communities harbour a distrust toward the state that developed throughout the preceding conflict due to political differences. The government is the sole funder of the CIT programme, which presented an interesting question as to whether state involvement had a positive or negative impact on the acceptance and implementation of CIT. The interviewee in charge of the health and well-being initiative in North Belfast exemplified this complicated relationship between the communities and the government:

*"The problem being it depends where you live, if you live in the CIT areas that are Protestants and you say Boris Johnson is giving the money, you get a thumbs up, if you say the same in North Belfast, they say 'go away'. There is positives and negatives. You get that anywhere, not just in Northern Ireland."*

*(Interviewee, North Belfast, Health and Safety Initiative)*

Gareth further solidified the notion that there can be a lack of trust between the community and the state, which can result in a fragile relationship. There can be a lack of trust or knowledge to how systems work, however, Gareth made it clear that his CBO are not there to advertise

the benefits of the government, they operate as Gas yard Feile, not as an extension of the state. This reverts back to one of the unique factors of the CIT programme, whilst it is a government run programme, the formulation and implementation of these initiatives relies solely on the already trusted CBOs.

Jonny was questioned on the state's involvement in CIT; Did this lead to a lack of trust or participation?

*"I'm not sure, I wouldn't be surprised if in the community, there were people who viewed the Communities in Transition and tackling paramilitarism initiative, as you know, maybe, negative or threatening, but the response broadly from lots of groups that we have been working with, lots of kind of ex-combatants who very genuinely want to have more positive communities and want to have restorative communities and say the violence here shouldn't have happened, and we can't go back to that. So, let's find a way forward, and the Alternatives is an organization that are doing that work."*

*(Jonny, East Belfast, STARS Initiative)*

Jonny alluded to the point that many people may not want or agree with the state playing such an active role within their community. However, when the wider goal of eradicating paramilitary activity is focused on, necessary compromises can be made. This began to be a recurring theme throughout the interviews. Although there may be a lack of trust with the government, once the money is there for the funding, the community members are either unaware of state involvement or are indifferent about the fact they are involved. State involvement is not problematic because the community don't really know of their involvement, Pete explained. The North Down community just see it as NI Alternatives, which has been embedded in the community for the past 20 years, the residents trust the CBO. When it comes to funding, people are willing to overlook the source:

*"Yes, it is state run. Not really any advantages or disadvantages, a lot of people on the ground couldn't care less where the money came from."*

*(Interviewee, North Belfast, Health and Well-being Initiative)*

TEO (governmental body) representative, Colin, was able to provide perspective from the other side of the coin. Colin provided a positive outlook on the relationship they share with both the CBOs and Cooperation Ireland:

*“But on the whole, I think our relationships are really good. And, and I think what TEO is good at is the direct engagement with communities, listening to them, taking feedback onboard and trying to ebb and flow as we go along. Similar in cooperation Ireland, I think our relationship with cooperation Ireland is spot on and I think what has been good, over the past two, three years, it's just become a bit of a support/challenge role, where they'll be able to feed things into us, ideas, methods of taking projects forward and we can say support and challenge, and attracting talent as equals.”*

*(Colin, The Executive Office)*

Overall, this research found that the relationships between TEO and the CBOs are strong, with open two-way communication, and direct engagement, with TEO taking feedback and listening to the individual communities. As Colin mentioned in the previous quote, the relationship between TEO and Cooperation Ireland is one of a challenge-support nature, which enables both stakeholders to seamlessly trade ideas and methods for taking projects forward for the betterment of CIT.

However, when it comes to the various statutory bodies, the relationships are not as straightforward as they appear to be between the other CBOs, as well as the state. Similarly, Brendan remarked on the strength of the relationship between TEO and Cooperation Ireland, whilst he simultaneously acknowledged the difficulties involved in dealing with statutory bodies. There can be tensions in relation to the way a statutory body carries out their work and the way CBOs implement a programme, this is still an issue which needs to be smoothed out, Brendan added. The statutory bodies, in some instances, are the gatekeepers to the communities and would not support the implementation of a programme such as CIT, as they can see the approach of sharing information and ideas as potentially threatening to the work that they do.

The PSNI play a significant role in these communities and the CIT programme as a whole as they are simultaneously implementing the criminality track of the Executives action plan on Tackling Paramilitarism and Organised crime. Colin highlighted the importance of having a strong relationship with the police:

*“I think the other relationship that is key to all this is the relationship with the police. I suppose the thing I'll say about the police is that it is a very complex organization here, I think one of those ones it's like peeling the onion, the more layers you peel, the more layers you find.”*

*(Colin, The Executive Office)*

In relation to the community safety and restorative practices initiatives, a strong relationship with the PSNI is essential to aid the success of the grassroots initiatives. Pete provided an example of the collaborative relationship that SAFE has with the PSNI in his community, a relationship which is necessary to ensure the improvement of the area, in relation to a topic such as drugs. An all-girls school within the community of North Down had an issue related to drug use, so they requested that the police come to the school to give an informative talk on drugs. However, the police in Northern Ireland cannot speak about drugs openly, as they embrace only one policy; “don’t do drugs”. Consequently, the PSNI would reach out to NI Alternatives to visit the school and deliver an informative seminar. PSNI representative, Keith, detailed this relationship that they have with Pete and other similar CBOs in the area:

*“Pete has my number and the community officer that covers the peninsula or Newtownards, so any stage he can send a message and ask who’s on duty. Whoever is in duty will ring. We have a relationship that if there is a problem, I will be here in 10 mins.”*

*(Keith, PSNI, North Down)*

Additionally, Keith reinforced the anecdote Pete spoke of, which certainly adds credibility to the strength of the relationship they share:

*“I don’t like talking about drugs with young people in school, because the PSNIs stance on drugs is ‘no’, the end, we are not talking about it. Whereas Pete could go into that school and talk about the impacts of drugs and different aspects of it.”*

*(Keith, PSNI, North Down)*

The stakeholders involved in the CIT programme include the community, the CBOs, Cooperation Ireland, TEO, the PSNI and the ex-prisoner and former combatant community. This research has found that, for the most part, relationships between these stakeholders are strong and collaborative. However, a strong relationship between CIT and the ex-prisoner and former combatant community is currently lacking. This relationship is elaborated on later in this chapter.

### 5.1.2 Effective distribution of Funding

It has been previously established in this thesis that the source of funding for these grassroots initiatives does indeed originate from outside the communities. It is funded by the government in Northern Ireland and more specifically TEO. They are the sole funders for the Communities in Transition programme. Cooperation Ireland, being the overall organisers of the CIT

programme, described how specific consideration was given to the socio-economic, deprivation and representation issues that these communities have, which formed the basis for how funding would be distributed most effectively:

*"What are some of the vulnerabilities within our community that are exploited by paramilitary groups, drug addiction is, is one of the clear ones. Okay, well then invest in health and wellbeing initiatives, which are going to reduce people's vulnerability either to become drug addicts or if they already are well to kind of give them support on the way out."*

*(Lucy, Cooperation Ireland)*

Furthermore, to ensure that funding is distributed effectively, the geographical size and population density of the community is taken into account. Equal funding for all the eight communities would not be practical as they all differ significantly in size. TEOs Colin provided the example of West Belfast, which has an enormous geographical size:

*"You could not with good conscience put the same money into west Belfast as what you would be in Lurgan, which is a population of 2000, couple of hundred households."*

*(Colin, The Executive Office)*

Colin also spoke about community infrastructure as a deciding factor for the distribution of funding, and the contrast in sophistication of this infrastructure. Community infrastructure refers to the quality, variety and number of CBOs in operation within a community. Ten million pounds could be spent within a year in the West Belfast community, however, in Lurgan, a community with significantly smaller community infrastructure, they would struggle to spend 10 million pounds in 10 years, Colin explained. Speaking to the various CBOs on the distribution of funding, the process behind allocating certain amounts to each organisation is further explained:

*"The funding is there in each different project the lead organisation has tendering, they work through cooperation Ireland work directly with myself and the TEO so that's the Executive office. The way the tenders work is there is a certain amount of money given to each organisation, there is a plan put in place and certain initiatives have to happen."*

*(Interviewee, North Belfast, Health and Well-being Initiative)*

This is, in general, how the funding gets allocated. More specifically, for the initiative in North Belfast, the interviewee described the many ways in which the money is distributed between

the initiatives in the communities. The interviewee explained, firstly, that the initiatives are weighted in terms of high level and smaller interventions, which acts as a deciding factor in the amount of funding allocated. Furthermore, the interviewee stated that the community itself is involved in the allocation of funds, due to the participatory approach of CIT. The participatory approach is vital for the effective distribution of funds, as without this method, CIT runs the risk of implementing initiatives that aren't necessarily required in the individual community or, worse still, repeating work that has already been done. Brendan explained the importance of taking contextual factors into account when distributing funds avoid repetitiveness:

*"It has to be a very specific, additional service that's different to what was there previously because if you're just doing more of the same that's not really going to be transformative, or it's not going to create a transition you want."*

*(Brendan, Queens University)*

From the perspective of TEO, collaboration with the CBOs is one of the strongest aspects of the programme. Explained in Chapter 4, the unique factor about CIT, in comparison to similar programmes that have gone before it, is that it centres around community empowerment, which plays a considerable role in ensuring funding is distributed effectively. There is certainly an upside from the programme using a more participatory approach, rather than an authoritative structure, according to the interviewees. Involving the community has made relationships stronger between the funding authority and the grassroots initiatives, Lucy explained:

*"And they do think that participatory approach has helped with that. That it isn't the state coming in and telling you that this is, what needs to happen. It's much more in listening kind of design, a much more partnership and respectful kind of approach. So, I think that that has helped but there's probably more that still could be done in terms of getting that community buy-in into the program."*

*(Lucy, Cooperation Ireland)*

Although it is evident that community involvement is a key factor in the implementation of the CIT programme and the effective distribution of funding, in practice it does not always go as planned. Pete highlighted certain aspects of the funding process that needs to be improved:

*"In terms of what we can do better, I think that funding bodies really need to think about how they release money. The way it should be is, have the consultation phase at the start, which*

*they did, but it was a nonsense. What they did is they asked the communities what they wanted and what they thought would help. And they did something else and didn't listen to anyone in the community, which was really frustrating. What they did was put the tenders out and started within 3 weeks, they shouldn't have done that, for me they should have given a couple of months so that you can plan and prepare and say this what we are doing."*

*(Pete, North Down, SAFE Initiative)*

Brendan referenced the uniqueness of the participatory approach adopted by the CIT programme, and how, if implemented correctly, could be the model used for all grassroots initiatives going forward. Once again, difficulties with the statutory bodies are alluded to by Brendan as the statutory bodies feel government funding doesn't understand the work that they do, and they wish to remain separate. Whereas what CIT does is mix government funding with local level ideas to create something that is more sustainable, with a view towards securing more funding further down the road. Brendan continued by praising the 12-month period of the programme that was allocated to deciphering community needs, as it ensured funding was not going to waste:

*"They identify what the key issues were, what the kind of potential projects that could resolve those issues are and build relationships. So, I mean, again, as I say, you know, people will criticize the program for different reasons, but I think that's one thing, the TEO did invest plenty of money and time into get that phase."*

*(Brendan, Queens University)*

One of the issues with the funding that became prominent throughout this research was indeed the length of the funding cycle. However, it was specially amended for the purpose of the CIT programme, whereby the funding cycle had originally been 18 months, but was doubled to three years to allow more strategic planning and alleviate pressure to deliver an initiative in a short period of time, the Professor explained. Brendan elaborated on the issue with the funding cycle, he noted that whilst there is a multitude of funding in Northern Ireland, the length of it leads to instability in staffing and the projects themselves:

*"Funding is very good in Northern Ireland, there's a lot of community funding around, but at the same time it's not long-term, so what you often have is what we've just had on CIT, you might have a years' worth of funding that might lead to something else, but sometimes it doesn't, and even if it does there is often a gap between the two phases which can obviously*

*lead to instability you know, you have people who depend on it and will take the risk for a bit further funding to get another job somewhere else. So, there's a large turnover of staff as well. And a lot of turnover projects, they're all quite similar, but often don't have structured 10 15-year funding, it's more six, 12-month funding”*

*(Brendan, Queens University)*

A lot of the challenges related to grassroots work in Northern Ireland revert back to the funding cycle in the voluntary sector according to the participants. Staff turnover, completion of initiatives within the cycle, and competition amongst CBOS, are a number of the challenges the voluntary sector face. The interviewee from North Belfast exemplified this issue and stressed the need for continuous and ongoing funding for programmes like CIT. Mirroring the problem that Brendan proposed, in relation to staff, the interviewee explained:

*“So, you get someone and then you train them up and put a lot of resource in and then after three years you say bye-bye to that person, they get a new job.”*

*(Interviewee, North Belfast, Health and Well-being Initiative)*

A significant amount of consideration has been put into ensuring that funding is effectively distributed throughout the CIT programme. This research has provided sufficient evidence that, through collaborative relationships and community participation, the funding is in fact effectively distributed. However, there are grievances about the length of the funding cycle, with the argument that is too short to implement the generational change that these initiatives are working towards. Furthermore, short funding cycle can lead to instability in staffing and thus, the grassroots initiatives themselves.

### 5.1.3 Ensuring the Sustainability of the Peace Process and Peace Education

Ensuring the sustainability of the peace process looks at guaranteeing the work done by CIT can be continued, whether by continued funding, or developing interpersonal relationships or looking at improving the resilience of the CBOs so that they have the tools to continue the work after the funding runs out. The CIT programme certainly aims to ensure the sustainability of the peace building process as its central goal is empowering these communities. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the work being implemented by CIT is generational in nature, which reinforces the fact that the programme is building toward a long term-vision of continued change. For example, building a sustainable community has, in-large, been covered under Strategies 1 (Community Autonomy) and 3 (Generational Work), in Chapter 4, both strategies

enhancing the argument that CIT is ensuring the sustainability of the peace process. This section reinforces the sentiment provided in those themes.

Lucy acknowledged that so many projects are limited in their success dependant on the length of their funding period. Although it has been noted that the funding period should be lengthened, this short funding period inspired CIT to concentrate on building initiatives that deal specifically with strengthening resilience. This ensures the work continues. The programme is not about larger agencies, whether it be charities or statutory agencies, coming into the communities and asserting themselves, rather Cooperation Ireland are ensuring it is community led:

*"Looking at things like leadership and not leadership, right from a sort of introductory thing up to level seven, which is just sort of degree equivalent, but the important thing around all of it, if it's been based on what it is to those areas that are of interest to the participants and are relevant for them to be able to take work forward in their local community."*

*(Lucy, Cooperation Ireland)*

This sort of capacity building is not something that happens overnight, patience and a view toward long-term success must be adopted:

*"And to be honest, because things, some of the areas are fairly intractable, but it's a bit early in the process to say whether it has been a successful stock or not, we have only had 18 months or so of delivery. These are long-term, systemic in some cases, certainly multi-generational issues that will take a substantial period to get right into and pull apart."*

*(Colin, The Executive Office)*

Brendan spoke, in general, about the difficulties associated with trying to tackle paramilitarism and organised crime. However, it is programmes such as CIT that are making a more peaceful, paramilitary-free society more attainable in the future. Ridding society of these paramilitary groups is a complicated issue, not least because of their relationship with organised crime, nevertheless grassroots initiatives play a vitally important role in smothering the coercive control of these groups:

*"If we are getting less people joining paramilitary groups, people have opportunities to kind of do more and we are building up the look of communities and we are building up the confidence in communities and we are building up the sense that communities are safer. That*

*narrows the impact that paramilitaries can have, more organized crimes gangs can have, you know, and that's ultimately the objective, I think for everyone."*

*(Brendan, Queens University)*

The work being done by the initiatives adopts view of providing two benefits simultaneously. The initial benefit being whatever skills, tools and knowledge taken away from the initiative, and how they put them to work in the present. The second benefit, likewise being skills, tools, knowledge, that they recycle continually back into their community to promote sustainable peace. The initiative in north Belfast improves a number of "champions" and "befrienders" in the community. This implies that the CIT programme is committed to ensuring that there are members of the community upskilled and capable of carrying on work after the CIT programme itself is ended. As well as upskilling the community toward being more resilient, CIT is about education. Pete explained how the SAFE initiative teaches appropriate lessons to young people now, in relation to the effects that their actions may cause, which in turn, helps deprive paramilitaries the oxygen they need. Hence, contributing to a sustained peace process:

*"How we would do that is we will do the young people saying we would say to the young people, like if there's any, any issues you have, if you want paramilitaries to go away, don't buy drugs from him. Don't join. You don't buy counterfeit gear from them. Don't support them in any way. And if you do that, then they won't have the oxygen that they need to still be here in ten or 15 years. So, we're saying to young people, well, the issue is actually in your hands and you can play a massive part from them having their boot on the neck of the community."*

*(Pete, North Down, SAFE Initiative)*

These are long term, systemic, and multi-generational issues that CIT is addressing. CIT's initiatives are stunting the recruitment of people into these paramilitaries, which is providing people with greater opportunities to do something productive with their lives. This builds confidence in the communities, and narrows the impact that paramilitaries can have, which is a stepping stone toward a sustainable peace.

#### 5.1.4 Immediate Effects of Violent Conflict and Using Multiple Strategies

Addressing immediate effects of violent conflict such as trauma passed down, socio-economic inequalities and employability are referenced under the subsequent section; addressing root causes, and highlights that, initiatives of this nature are implemented throughout the CIT programme. Therefore, this research confirms that CIT possesses this key factor.

Likewise, with the use of multiple strategies, CIT's diverse range of overarching themes seen in Box 4.2, from health and well-being, art and culture and young people, to restorative practices, community safety and capacity building certainly highlights a multitude of peacebuilding strategies.

Peacebuilding is now seen as a necessary element of community-based DDR. This research has found that, not only does CIT incorporate the process of peacebuilding but that it possesses all of Skarlatos et al. (2013) factors to successful grassroots peacebuilding. Thus, implying that CIT is comprehensively implementing the peacebuilding aspect of community-based DDR.

## 5.2 Addressing Root Causes

The different strategies used by CIT, highlighted in Chapter 4, revolve around building capacity in those specific societal areas. The researcher used primary data in the areas of health and well-being, art and culture, community safety and restorative practices, secondary data is also used in relation to how CIT is operationalised through grassroots initiatives to determine whether the programme addresses the root causes of violent conflict. Addressing root causes is the second element investigated in this thesis, that is deemed necessary in the implementation of community-based DDR. 'Root causes', in this thesis refers to the lack of socio-economic capacity within the CIT communities, as well as lack of community safety and participation.

### 5.2.1 Socio-economic Capacity Building

Chapter 4 produced three prominent strategies that are seen as necessary, by the CIT programme, when contributing to tackling paramilitarism at the grassroots level. Strategy 1 (Community Autonomy) gives a detailed description of how capacity is being built in these communities, with a view toward the future. Furthermore, 'Capacity Building' is one of overarching themes under the CIT programme (see box 4.2). This research has found that the communities that are involved in the CIT programme are portrayed negatively in the media, which in turn lowers the aspirations of those, especially young people, in the area. When the aspirations to gain employment or seek further education are lowered in the community it can result in community members being recruited by paramilitaries as they are seen as a viable option for making money. The art and culture programme in Derry strives to create a more positive representation of their community by way of getting community members involved in, and increasing their interest for, art and music:

*"So, a lot of the programmes last year were to keep peoples spirits up and provide positive representation of the area. We did a film event in March. So, there were seven events documented between music art and interviews, and made into films. A couple of hundred people involved, school's youth clubs, children's groups."*

*(Gareth, Derry, Art and Culture Initiative)*

The socio-economic benefit behind the initiative is a provision of training in arts which can transpire into employment or volunteering going forward (Cooperationireland, n.d)

The health and well-being initiative in North Belfast addresses underlying community and personal issues around mental and physical health. Their 'champion and befriender' strategy directly strives toward building capacity amongst community members, as it is granting them a positive, important role within the society, according to the interviewee:

*"First of all, we had to recruit 16 champions, through that there was a bit of capacity building to upskill them towards being able to help them in the community. They would become the go-to people."*

*(Interviewee, North Belfast, Health and Well-being Initiative)*

These champions would be trained in areas of mental health, and would be already members of separate CBOs, so that they would have the capacity to advise local residents on treatments and on what services are available in the area. Furthermore, the interviewee explained, each champion and befriender could apply for 500 pounds to go towards funding a bachelor or master degree. Of the 60 champions the interviewee had recruited at the time of this research;

*"There was probably 10 people that took that on board (the 500 pound) to upskill themselves"*

*(Interviewee, North Belfast, Health and Well-being Initiative)*

The interviewee explained that one of the main motivations behind people becoming champions is to build their CV with a view toward future job applications. The befrienders are also residents in the community, but not workers in CBOs. The befrienders would aid the community by giving out free parcels with health information, with food and toys in them, offering supportive and reliable relationships in the community, connecting people to the services in the area, in addition to being involved in the planning and running of community events. The befrienders training assists in establishing a mentoring/peer support programme

which will involve cross sections of the community promoting resilience and creating a better community.

The CBO that implements the health and well-being initiative in North Belfast also carries out initiatives under the different overarching themes of CIT, not just health and well-being. The CIT Capacity Building Programme, in North Belfast, ended in June 2021. Under this programme 256 people were trained, in addition to 52.5 mentoring days delivered, based on pre-identified needs. A further nine social action projects, which allowed the development of new and existing working relationships in the community, were delivered, with 149 community members participating. The grassroots initiative produced a ‘Capacity Building Toolkit’, that reflected programme learning and focused on what is necessary to build and develop a more resilient, shared and lawful society (Cooperationireland, n.d).

The work being done by the community safety initiative, SAFE, in North Down similarly works to increase social capacity in their community via talks and engagement with the younger community members as well as a forum with more senior members of the community so that they can have a say in the community’s safety. According to Pete, this forum meets on a regular basis.

*“So, there's about 15 in the forum which have people of different backgrounds, you know, are pretty diverse, there's male, female, some of them are retired, some of them are working, some are civil servants.”*

*(Pete, North Down, SAFE Initiative)*

Copius Consulting has provided free training across all the CIT communities, in areas such as tendering for the voluntary and community sector, and collaborative problem solving for community safety (Copiusconsulting.com, 2021). In the Carrickfergus and Larne community, the Equip Capacity Building project, working through Intercomm Ireland, have supported 12 CBOs to increase their capacity, by supporting residents who aspire to be role models in the community, equipping them with relevant training and skills (Cooperationireland, n.d). Lucy, of Cooperation Ireland, detailed the entire ethos of CIT stating that is all about building up these communities at the grassroots level, to increase resiliency and diminish vulnerability of community members.

### 5.2.2 Community Safety and Participation

Community participation has been addressed in detail in Chapter 4, under Strategy 1 (Community Autonomy). The CIT programme, as a whole, has involved the individual communities in the consultation and design of, not only the overarching themes of the CIT programme itself, but also the consultation, design and implementation of the grassroots initiatives themselves. Another factor, that was addressed in Chapter 4, is that all the grassroots initiatives that were researched for this thesis look to community participation as an indicator of how successful their initiative is, further highlighting the importance the CIT programme places on community participation.

In relation to community safety, CIT dedicates one their overarching themes to this societal issue. Community safety initiatives are implemented in all eight of the communities in the CIT programme. The SAFE initiative has been mentioned numerous times throughout this thesis, and the work they do toward educating the community, both young and old, on the policing and justice systems, as well as identifying key areas in the community that need special attention to ensure community safety.

However, NI Alternatives are not the only CBO delivering community safety projects. Equip Community Safety Project, out of Intercomm Ireland, in the Carrickfergus and Larne community have, similarly, established a community safety forum who work together to address local safety issues (Cooperationireland, n.d). Ashton Community Trust delivered the North Belfast Community Safety Programme 2020-2021, whereby 25 young volunteers received training in appreciative inquiry techniques and, subsequently, conducted 119 door-to-door interviews with residents across the community, which led to the development of a community safety plan. 12 residents also received training in Domestic Violence Awareness and the Value of Positive Youth Engagement Strategies (Cooperationireland, n.d). In the Lurgan community, CRJI have supported the development of community responses to crime and anti-social behaviour. Likewise, to the above-mentioned initiatives, a community safety forum was set up to establish better partnerships between local communities, statutory bodies and the PSNI. The community engagement forums created a Priority Action Plan with a view towards combating drugs, anti-social behaviour and criminal gangs in the community, which will be operationalised in the next phase (Cooperationireland, n.d).

Of the three elements of successful community-based DDR that this thesis is investigating, 'addressing root causes' appears is the most prominent in the CIT programme. The entire ethos of the CIT programme revolves around building capacity. This section has further highlighted

the multitude of ways that CIT initiatives build socio-economic capacity in the communities. The second root cause, addressing community safety and participation, is more than sufficiently focused on in the CIT programme, with community safety initiatives being carried out in every CIT community, and community participation ensured through involving the community in the consultation, design and implementation of the CIT programme as well as the grassroots initiatives.

### 5.3 Target Both Combatants and Broader War Effected Community

According to the literature on successful community-based DDR, and more specifically reintegration, the involvement of former combatants in the implementation of the reintegration process is paramount to the process being effective. Furthermore, not only the participation of the ex-prisoners and former combatants in the DDR process, but also the broader war effected community. Throughout the interviews the researcher noticed that there was certainly a lack of, or non-existent, involvement from the former combatants. As a result of this, the researcher can make the summation that CIT, so far, has solely catered to the broader war effected community via the grassroots initiatives that have been implemented in these communities.

#### 5.3.1 Ex-Prisoner and Former Combatant Involvement

The initial question that was put the grassroots initiatives was simply; Are former combatants or ex-prisoners involved in the implementation of your initiative?

*"I am sure there are former prisoners and ex paramilitaries that have worked on our programmes. However, that they got those roles on the basis of being ex-paramilitaries, no. Not in this case."*

*(Gareth, Derry, Art and Culture Initiative)*

Gareth acknowledged that this does not have to be the case going forward and talked about some plans for ex-prisoner and former combatant involvement that were in place prior to Covid. There were other examples of the grassroots initiatives mentioning that former combatants may be involved, however, they would not have been involved due to the fact that they were former combatants. The interviewee from the North Belfast health and well-being initiative, similar to Gareth, was not sure of their involvement but mentioned they could be. Programme coordinator for the community safety initiative in North Down, Pete, mentioned how there are very little, if any, former combatants involved. However, Pete proceeded to explain that it is due to the nature of the work that NI Alternatives does:

*"Majority of our staff, like my background was in performing arts actually and then youth work, some people's background is in law and stuff. Some is in social work. But the majority is in youth work."*

*(Pete, North Down, SAFE Initiative)*

Jonny from the STARS initiative being carried out in East Belfast remarked, that there are, in fact, former combatants involved. However, Jonny explained how the former combatants he was referring to are not based in his East Belfast community:

*"I know one of the best examples I think we have in Bangor there are group of older gentlemen who I'm pretty sure they're ex combatants"*

*"And I know that from speaking to a co-worker, who's in Bangor, the conversations have been really very fruitful and productive."*

*(Jonny, East Belfast, STARS Initiative)*

Although Jonny does not refer specifically to the East Belfast community, he highlighted that the organisation, as a whole, being NI Alternatives, does involve ex paramilitaries in other communities involved in the CIT programme and admitted how he feels it is only positive to have ex-combatants involved in the implementation of a restorative practices' initiative. Once again, although NI Alternatives may have former combatants involved in the CIT programme in other communities, it is more a coincidence, rather than the CBO seeking the former combatant due to their background and experience.

The researcher was granted the opportunity to speak to one ex-prisoner and former combatant, and one former combatant. Both interviewees work for ex-prisoner support groups on opposite sides of the sectarian divide. They were questioned as to whether they were consulted in relation to the structuring or implementation of CIT. Colin is the coordinator for Charter NI, as well as the Open Doors project, which includes various ex-prisoners and former combatants. He stated they were consulted, in relation to the suitability of his community to avail of CIT:

*"We were consulted in the early days of it. I can only speak for South Belfast, and I have to reiterate that. And we did not avail of any of it. One because we're seen as a settled, peaceful community. We're way ahead of the posse on most of everything that we're doing. So, we didn't feel that, that we went and asked them and said like, the work we are doing, why have we been over looked for this here? You know, the answer was, well, there's nothing happened in South*

*Belfast. Now, we could have been smarter and said, well, do you want something to happen? We're not into that you know, we knew we have a vision in where we want to be."*

*(Colin, Charter Ex-prisoner Group)*

Subsequently, Colin was asked whether he thought CIT could be effective without tapping into the valuable resource, which is ex-prisoners and former combatants:

*"They (ex-prisoners/former combatants) are the only people that can deliver here. CIT, great programme. Everything that they're trying to do, great program. Without the former combatant, the ex-prisoner is not going to go nowhere."*

*(Colin, Charter Ex-prisoner Group)*

Colin explained that his community, as well as other communities involved in CIT will not engage, unless the former combatant and ex-prisoner are involved. Colin enlightened the researcher with a saying they have amongst the ex-prisoner community:

*"We have a saying, 'anything about us without us, is not for us."*

*(Colin, Charter Ex-prisoner Group)*

There needs to be an aspect of the programme that the ex-prisoner and former combatant group benefits from, if this is lacking, Colin and his colleagues won't go for it. He detailed that they already have their own plans in place through Charter NI. Fra, similarly works as a coordinator with a group that supports ex-prisoners and former combatants, Teach na Failte. Fra mirrored this concept that without involving the ex-prisoner, CIT lacks a certain credibility in many of the communities. CIT looking to academics and people outside the community to solve inner problems is problematic from Fras perspective:

*"I would say it (CIT) will be very hard, there are very few people, that I know of, that have really bought into Communities in Transition. There is a community based, local residents' group that bought into it, got funding like CRJI and Falls Residence Association and then on the Loyalist side, you have Alternatives. I've met and trained with all these people, and I have said to them that Republicanism will not buy into it, because it hasn't been properly articulated."*

*(Fra, Teach na Failte Ex-prisoner Group)*

Fra expressed his knowledge regarding the CIT programme. He was aware of the Conflict Research Institute, in Queens University, receiving a big contract to undertake research in the various communities, however, he did not agree with the method, especially within the close-knit communities that are part of CIT:

*“They are giving 35000 pound a year to these six researchers, I was just on about West Belfast, New Lodge and North Belfast. Whose doors are they going to knock? And if you are a total stranger from down round Bangor, it won’t work.”*

*(Fra, Teach na Failte Ex-prisoner Group)*

Interviewees from the ex-prisoner and former combatant community are not optimistic toward the success of CIT. Furthermore, they are of the opinion that the ex-prisoner or former combatant are the best suited individuals or groups to deliver a programme such as CIT. Fra and Colin both believed that there are very few people in their respective communities that have bought into the CIT concept. This offers quite a contrast to the narrative of the CBOs, TEO and Cooperation Ireland. A contributing factor to Fra and Colins line of thinking is CITs use of academics, from outside the community, coming in and formulating what is needed for the transition of *their* communities, although these academics did so with the help of community members. Overall, at the time of this research, intentional involvement of the ex-prisoner and former combatant community has been deficient, which can result in the process of community-based DDR, specifically reintegration and even reconciliation, being delayed.

### 5.3.2 Support for Former Combatant and Ex-Prisoner Participation

A paradoxical theme started to emerge whereby none of the initiatives seemed to have ex-prisoner or former-combatant involvement, intentionally, yet they all claim that it is important to have them involved. The interviewee from North Belfast explained how ex-paramilitaries are welcomed, and would go as far to say he would encourage it, as a result of their unique life experiences growing up throughout the ‘Troubles’ and furthermore, many of them having spent time in prison:

*“I think it is good to have ex-prisoners and former paramilitaries involved because they do have the knowledge, they do have the power and the kudos behind them. So, basically if they (ex- paramilitaries) are saying it is good and you should go down this route and not a paramilitary route, then that’s a positive. People look up to them.”*

*(Interviewee, North Belfast, Health and Well-being Initiative)*

Similarly, Pete from North Down does not play down the roles that former combatants can, and have played in the peace process. Pete expressed his belief that just because you have done wrong in the past, doesn't necessarily inhibit you from having a positive effect on the future. He even went as far to say that former combatants have done more for the peace process in Northern Ireland than David Trimble, Nobel Peace Prize winner, or any politicians for that matter. Although the ex-paramilitaries seem to play a small part in the individual initiatives, TEO also iterated the importance of ex-paramilitaries when asked were they involved in the implementation of CIT. TEO's Colin mentioned consulting with ex-prisoner groups due to them being a theme in the Independent Reporting Commissions report on the Tackling Paramilitarism and Organised Crime action plan. Colin detailed how TEO has a responsibility for ex-prisoners:

*"These are people, who most of them were released under the good Friday agreement. And haven't been able to fully reintegrate into society because they have convictions on their records. And more of what we are hearing or seeing is that those effects are being felt by their families."*

*(Colin, The Executive Office)*

TEO are actively working to deal with the knock-on effects that these convictions have on relatives of ex-prisoners, in relation to employment and other societal aspects that impede successful reintegration. Whilst the immersion of the ex-prisoner and former combatant community in the CIT programme leaves room for improvement, the fact that their participation is being advocated for is promising for the possible future acceptance of that community into the CIT programme.

### 5.3.2 Personal Transition Plan

Although, currently, ex-prisoner and former combatant involvement is minimal in the CIT programme, there are indeed plans going forward to develop an additional theme named 'personal transition'. Speaking to Lucy from Cooperation Ireland, the researcher probed the interviewee as to whether past cases of successful reintegration of paramilitaries, and specifically the involvement of ex-paramilitaries, were referenced when creating the CIT programme. Lucy explained the idea behind 'personal transition:

*"Yeah, because that was one of the things I didn't mention, was around personal transition. Essentially how you support individuals who were involved in some way. Yeah, massive component of that is ex-prisoners and former combatants."*

*(Lucy, Cooperation Ireland)*

The theme is in its early developmental stages as it was only awarded in February of this year. Essentially it will involve two regional projects in both the Catholic, Nationalist, Republican (CNR) communities and Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist (PUL) communities which will revolve around advocacy and support for ex-prisoners to support their reintegration, Lucy explained. Lucy proceeded to explain how it has been one of the more contentious ends of the programme. The difficulty lies with trying to reintegrate the former combatants, rather than the ex-prisoners, as the former combatants may not have been convicted of an offence in the past, thus, providing them with support, whilst ensuring they do not incriminate themselves is an obstacle CIT must overcome, according to Lucy. Correspondingly, Brendan acknowledged the personal transition theme, and elaborated on Lucy's remark of it being a contentious undertaking:

*"In terms of CIT there's, there's a theme of work with the label personal transition. And it's one that is still taking form. The reason why it is still taking form is it really is not easy to design projects to support personal transition. It's personal, it's very sensitive, pretty personal. So, they develop a system of work. You know, you obviously have to be flexible enough to deal with all personal challenges, with at the moment, I mean, if you were to look at, say a cohort of ex-prisoners and, you know, one part of these areas, for instance, East Belfast there's so many problems and even the knock-on impact of being an ex-prisoner, you know, that personal trauma. But a lot of them are dealing in levels of unemployment, and there's some substance abuse and stuff like that there as well."*

*(Brendan, Queens University)*

Brendan informed the researcher that a theme of this nature requires significant amount of personalisation toward the individual whom is participating, which warrants it taking considerably longer to develop. Recruitment is very narrow, as the projects themselves are very specific, as it caters to different demographics in the community:

*"And I think that you can end up with is you're going to be dealing with people who are very young and who have been involved in that recruitment process, or coercive control and you are trying to bring them away from paramilitary organisation. But you're also trying to support an ex-prisoner who has been through a lot. He has all these problems."*

*(Brendan, Queens University)*

Brendan continued by stating the level of thought and personalisation that this theme needs, as it has to be very sensitive to the unique situation of every individual who is availing of the support. The ‘personal transition’ theme can be availed of by those individuals that strive toward genuinely bettering themselves. However, Brendan explained that ‘group’ transition could be more applicable. Unfortunately, it is something they have not figured out as of yet:

*“I think when an individual wants to make a genuine attempt to transition and wants to really change their life direction, the project can support them and I think there's a theme of work under the label of personal transition which is geared towards that. I think where it probably doesn't offer support, is where it doesn't necessarily deal with group transition. Group transition is still a vague thing here.”*

*(Brendan, Queens University)*

This theme, which is currently in its developmental stage, has the potential to fully address this third element of community-based DDR, targeting both former combatants and the broader war-affected community. However, it comes with challenges, not least providing a support programme for former combatants without them running the risk of incriminating themselves. Additionally, the theme requires a significant amount of personalisation, as it is not only for ex-prisoners and former combatants, but for members of the community who were affected by the conflict. This may include, survivors of bombings, victims of attacks, former members of the police etc. This takes a substantially longer period of time to develop and requires additional resources.

#### 5.4 Findings

This chapter set out with the objective of identifying, to what extent the CIT programme includes criteria of community-based DDR. Three key criteria of successful community-based DDR were derived from the literature. First, was the need for community-based DDR to include peacebuilding activities. This chapter has outlined that CIT not only incorporates the process of peacebuilding, but also includes several key attributes of successful grassroots peacebuilding. This implies that the CIT programme is positively and impressively implementing this criterion of community-based DDR. The second key criterion of community-based DDR identified in this chapter was the need to address root causes, referring to building socio-economic capacity and ensuring community safety and participation. The CIT programme extensively addresses all of these root causes. All of the grassroots initiatives strive to improve capacity in some form, and one of the overarching themes (See box 4.2) is indeed

‘Capacity Building’. Similarly, CIT has an overarching theme dedicated to community safety, with safety initiatives being carried in all eight of the included communities. CIT also works hard to ensure community participation, with many of the grassroots initiatives placing it as a measurement for their success. Lastly, the criterion of involving former combatants and the broader war effected community is the weakest, of the three, for the CIT programme. The ex-prisoner and former combatant community have been neglected, in terms of involvement and implementation of the CIT programme. The former combatants themselves believe that the CIT programme cannot work without their involvement, and feel the programme lacks credibility with the wider community as a result of their non-involvement. The argument can be made that if greater cooperation is realised with the ex-prisoner and former combatant community, it could translate into wider community participation. That being said, CIT are already in the process addressing this by adding the promising overarching theme of ‘Personal Transition’, which has the potential of ensuring that the CIT programme substantially assures all criteria of community-based DDR investigated in this chapter.



## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Literature on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) brings out significant challenges in reintegrating paramilitary groups and an important conclusion from this literature is that civil society involvement may be essential for the success of the DDR process. Earlier studies have indicated that this was also the case in Northern Ireland, where many of the preceding DDR initiatives have been rather top-down, dealing exclusively with disarmament and demobilisation, neglecting to develop formal reintegration schemes for its combatants (Gallaher, 2017). Reintegration success, to date, is not a result of any specific governmental blueprint, but a product of the ex-prisoners and former combatants themselves working out of their ex-prisoner support groups, set up with EU funding (Gallaher, 2017). This study explored a current programme that adopts a different tactic to the reintegration process, with the emphasis being placed on a bottom-up approach, engaging grassroots initiatives as the implementers of the programme. The Communities in Transition (CIT) programme is a government funded, yet community implemented, programme that is part of the Executives action plan on Tackling Paramilitary Activity and Organised Crime in Northern Ireland. It is also a formal part of the DDR process in Northern Ireland. The main research question was; *To what extent does CIT realise community-based DDR?* By an evaluation of the ongoing programme this study contributes to debates on community-based DDR, civil society, and what is needed to ensure that DDR is reconciliatory in nature by, firstly, analysing how grassroots initiatives contribute to tackling paramilitarism under the CIT programme. Following that, the CIT programme was analysed with reference to certain characteristics identified in the literature that might contribute to successful community-based DDR.

To operationalise the research questions, and assess the programmes, I initially used discourse analysis to examine the interview transcripts and, subsequently, thematic analysis to identify prevalent themes as to how the CIT programme, and specifically the grassroots initiatives, try to combat societal problems, such as drug addiction, employability, education, and community safety, which have a correlation to sustained paramilitary activity. Then, I used discourse analysis again to discover relevant information in the transcripts relating to key criteria of community-based DDR. Early DDR processes revolved around security and conversion of post-conflict societies, however, in the past 20 years DDR has gone through an evolution, resulting in an ambitious agenda, supposedly contributing to peacebuilding, addressing root causes of the conflict and targeting both ex-combatants and the broader war-affected society. While peacebuilding occurs on all levels of society, this research was particularly interested in

peacebuilding at the grassroots level, as that is where CIT operates. Skarlatos et al. (2013) framework, that identifies five key elements that help assure peacebuilding is really of a grassroots nature, was used to indicate how CIT is functioning as a grassroots producer of community-based DDR. Astrom and Ljunggren (2016) and Asiedu (2010) all point out that it is essential that DDR assures that, root causes to violent conflict, such as, a lack of socio-economic capacity, community safety and community participation, are addressed. Discourse analysis was used to determine whether or not CIT addresses these root causes, and to what extent. Finally, a significant amount of literature on the DDR process highlights the importance of former combatant involvement, either as originators, implementors or participants in the reintegration programmes, and portray it as vital to the overall success of the programme. Former combatant involvement, as well as the involvement of the broader war-affected community, was assessed through data gathered from the interviews.

My research efforts were strengthened by situating myself in Belfast for a month. I was provided with enhanced perspective and context, which transpired into me having a greater knowledge of, and passion for, what I was researching and writing about. This time spent in Northern Ireland produced opportunities to conduct significant interviews with members of the PSNI, and ex-prisoner and former combatant community, that would have been impossible had I not been there. The Covid-19 pandemic proved a challenge as it shortened the time I got to spend in Northern Ireland, due to restrictions. Moreover, many of the initiatives that are part of this research were only returning to physical activities as I was nearing the end of my research. Whilst I did manage to venture to two of the communities and sit-in on an event, it would have been beneficial for this research if I had been able to conduct further field research. If I was to continue researching this theme, I would certainly like to increase the number of grassroots initiatives that were interviewed to add greater scope, as well as physically attend more of the CIT events. Initially I had intended on conducting a survey to gauge both the participants, and the wider communities, opinion on the CIT programme, however, again as a result of limited activity due to the pandemic, this was deemed infeasible.

According to my interviewees, three strategies used by grassroots initiatives, as part of the CIT programme are; 1) Building Community Autonomy, 2) Using Diversionary Methods, and, 3) Applying Generational Work. The terminology was chosen due to the prevalence of these phrases in the conversations with the interviewees.

Community autonomy is a community taking independent and organised initiative on political, social, cultural, educational and economic affairs (Flores, 1999). The interviewees expressed how community autonomy needs to be developed in each community, with each communities' individual needs taken into account. Each CIT community was involved in the decision-making process, throughout an exceptional consultation phase that lasted 12 months, to ensure community needs were heard and detailed plans were put in place. The practical aspect of CIT seeks to upskill, train, and build resilience in the communities under the overarching themes (see box 4.2), so that the community are equipped with the appropriate tools to independently address local social, cultural, educational and economic issues after the CIT programme has finished. Levels of community participation are also used by the CBOs as indicators to the success of the initiatives. Measuring the capacity built in the community is important as it can indicate the likelihood of these communities becoming autonomous. The logic being, the more capacity built, the greater chance the community has to operate independently. However, whilst participation and empowerment are important factors in ensuring community autonomy, the interviewees alluded to a number of other societal factors that need to be operating in synchronicity, such as employment and education sectors of the government. Basically, if these grassroots initiatives are improving the employability of these participants, then the government needs to work on bringing more jobs to the area. Likewise with education, it is to no avail if young people are joining homework clubs and receiving outside lessons, but the school system fails to offer extended support for disadvantaged young people.

Diversionary methods, a term which many of the interviewees utilised, refer to the techniques used by the grassroots initiatives. This research found that the grassroots initiatives, under the CIT programme, use two diversionary methods. The initiatives that fall under art and culture, and health and well-being use tools such as music, drama, and sports events, as well as, promoting positive mental and physical health, to contribute to diverting residents away from becoming involved in anti-social behaviour, which the interviewees described as a stepping stone to paramilitarism in these communities. For initiatives of this nature, it was portrayed as essential not to highlight the 'tackling paramilitarism' aspect of the CIT programme as it would only act as a deterrent for many residents. The research showed that rather than tackling the paramilitary groups head-on, these initiatives aim for the softer approach to tackling paramilitarism by reducing the ground on which they operate. The community safety and restorative practices initiatives investigated in this research use different diversionary methods, but with a similar goal of reducing the operational ground these paramilitaries hold. In addition

to offering activities to steer residents from the coercive grip of the paramilitaries, they aim to educate the communities on the policing and justice systems, as well as in restorative practices. Thus, diverting the residents from seeking the paramilitaries help in resolving local disputes. Organisations such as NI Alternatives and CRJI can be used as a substitute for paramilitaries, as well as the PSNI, in resolving some local issues such as damaged property or anti-social behaviour.

Finally, interviewees highlighted that many activities under the CIT programme should be characterised as ‘generational work’. This means that the work being carried out through the grassroots initiatives is generational, hence, the intended effects of the initiatives may not be felt for 10, 20 or even 30 years’ time. The health and well-being initiative in North Belfast is trying to reduce health inequalities and increase life expectancy, which are major issues in these deprived areas. Both of these issues cannot be fixed in a three-year funding cycle. A number of the interviewees expressed that the CIT programmes’ community safety and restorative practices’ initiatives are about changing people’s mindsets on the acceptability of paramilitaries in society, as the ‘Troubles’ are still fresh in the psyche of anyone over the age of thirty. The interviewees explained how it is ‘investment in people’ that is needed to provide them with life chances and positive outcomes, and that these intended societal and cultural shifts happen over generations, this is why grassroots initiatives that aim to lessen the coercive control of paramilitaries must have a generational outlook. As Jonny from the STARS initiative in East Belfast put it, “It is the small shift in the needle over time”.

Interviewees pointed out that a major concern is the fact that paramilitary activity and organised crime have become inextricably linked, and to tackle this issue both tracks of the Executive action plan on Tackling Paramilitarism and Organised Crime are evenly important. This research learned that building up the enforcement response and capacity in these communities takes generations to unfold.

The first criterion of successful community-based DDR that was explored in this thesis was peacebuilding, specifically grassroots peacebuilding. The CIT programme consists of, to some extent, all five of Skarlatos et al. (2013) key elements of successful grassroots peacebuilding. This research discovered that the first element, the need for significant relationships between all of the stakeholders, was prevalent for most of the stakeholders involved in the CIT programme. These relationships are strong and collaborative. However, this research found that a positive, concerted relationship between the CIT programme and the ex-prisoner and

former combatant community is currently minimal. It was concluded that funding is distributed effectively throughout the communities, and a significant amount of consideration has been dedicated to ensuring this, thus, consisting of Skarlatos et al. (2013) second element. Yet, there was a recurring sentiment from the interviewed CBOs that the funding cycle is too short to implement the generational change that these initiatives are striving towards. All three of the strategic themes identified in Chapter 4 highlight CITs dedication to sustaining the peace process. The CIT programme is affecting the recruitment of residents into the paramilitary groups and providing them with greater opportunities to be more productive with their lives through the diversionary methods and building community autonomy, whilst the application of generational work can further contribute to the sustainability of the peace process. Skarlatos et al. (2013) fourth element for successful grassroots peacebuilding, which is addressing immediate effects of conflict, such as socio-economic inequalities and employability is explained in further detail under the second criterion of community-based DDR, addressing root causes. Lastly, CIT's diverse range of overarching themes of art and culture, health and well-being, capacity building, restorative practices, community safety etc. adequately portray that CIT uses multiple strategies in the implementation of their programme, the final necessity of Skarlatos et al. (2013) framework.

Consistent with the literature, peacebuilding is an integral part of the second-wave of DDR. CIT possesses key attributes of successful grassroots peacebuilding. This research proposes that CIT not only complements community-based DDR by including peacebuilding, but in fact, the findings would suggest that this component is operating rather successfully. Relationships between the CIT programme and the ex-prisoner and former combatant community need to be improved, and an extension of the funding cycle to accommodate the generational work being done is recommended.

The research has shown that the second criterion of successful community-based DDR examined in this thesis, 'addressing root causes' is significantly covered by the CIT programme. The first root cause identified in the literature, is a lack of socio-economic capacity. One of CITs overarching themes deals specifically with capacity building, and findings from the interviews further highlighted the work being done by the grassroots initiatives in relation to increasing education attainment, employability, upskilling and financial aid. Community safety was also identified as a 'root cause' to be addressed by community-based DDR. Similar to capacity building, CIT has dedicated an overarching theme to community safety. CIT is linked with community safety initiatives in all eight of the

participating communities. Ensuring participation of the community in the DDR process is referred to numerous times in the literature. The operational strategy, building ‘community autonomy’ explained the importance that CIT places on having the community involved in the consultation, design, and implementation of the grassroots initiatives and the overall programme.

The involvement of both combatants and the broader war-affected community was the third, and final, criterion of community-based DDR that this research measured the CIT programme against. Former combatant involvement in their own reintegration process appeared, almost as a common denominator, in the literature on successful DDR programmes. Literature points out that involvement of ex-combatants is essential for the success of DDR programmes. Most CBOs I spoke to, however, pointed out that they did not specifically include this group, as it was not deemed essential by the organizing bodies, TEO or Cooperation Ireland. Instead, they expected that, by trying to be inclusive of the wider community in general, ex-combatants would be included as well. Ex-prisoners and former combatants, however, argued that this was not the case, and that few of them, as well as a significant number of the wider community, participated in the programme due to a lack of explicit efforts to include them.

The main research question posed by this thesis was; To what extent does the CIT programme realise community-based DDR. The research has shown that CIT possesses the elements of ‘peacebuilding’, and ‘addressing root causes’, and furthermore, the CIT programme is performing strongly in these areas. The literature would suggest that the inclusion of ex-prisoners and former combatants needs to be improved to give these communities a greater chance of achieving successful reintegration and overall reconciliation. However, this research has learned that CIT is already in the process of solving this issue, through the development of a ‘personal transition’ overarching theme.

With the research question addressed, the primary research objective was to add to the debate in the literature on what is needed to ensure DDR is reconciliatory in nature. The literature conveyed a mutual importance for both social and economic reintegration, as failing economic reintegration may have a large impact on social reintegration. Willems and Van Leeuwen (2015), as well as Lotscher (2016) argue that the process of reconciliation is deeply interconnected with social reintegration, so much so that the former can be dependent on the implementation of the latter. Bowd (2008) explained that in order to link these processes of

reintegration and reconciliation, social capital must be built. According to the literature, tenets of social capital include communication, cooperation, mutual respect, trust and social cohesion.

The researcher suggests that this thesis has provided enough evidence, via an exploration of the stakeholders' relationships, to show that the CIT programme does, in fact, possess these tenets of generating social capital. However, arguably the most important stakeholders in the DDR programme, the ex-prisoner and former combatants, are not yet intentionally involved in the initiative. Certainly, from the interviews conducted with members of the ex-prisoner and former combatant community, it appears that they have very little trust or cooperation with the CIT programme, as a result of which they often remain outside the programme. Therefore, it can be argued that in order for the CIT programme to foster reconciliation, firstly, social capital needs to be built with the ex-prisoner and former combatant community. Bowd (2008) explained that links need to be developed and strengthened between the ex-prisoner/former combatant community, and the civilians affected by the conflict. Furthermore, he adds that the state needs to embed diversity within societal institutions, and allow for inter-ethnic cooperation, hence, enabling continual, mutually dependent interaction between all actors (Bowd, 2008). Applying that logic to this case, CIT needs to be more inclusive of the ex-prisoner and former combatant in their overall programme. Not merely dealing with them as separate to society, via their own specialised programmes, but integrating them into a multitude of the grassroots initiatives carried out by CIT, building social capital throughout the community. That being said, the interviewees alluded to an additional overarching theme that was in its developmental stage, 'personal transition'. Essentially, this theme will involve two projects on either side of the sectarian divide that revolve around advocacy and support for ex-prisoners and former combatants to support their reintegration. This theme may have the potential to increase the social capital deemed necessary to foster reconciliation within these communities. I would recommend further research to be carried out on the 'personal transition' theme during, and after, its implementation, collecting perspectives from the CBOs, TEO, Cooperation Ireland and the ex-prisoner and former combatant community, to further gauge its contribution to the reintegration and reconciliation processes. This can also be applied to the CIT programme as a whole. This research was conducted whilst the programme was ongoing, there is still a significant amount of work to be carried out before the funding cycle comes to an end. Further research is recommended after the programme has ended to truly assess what immediate impact these initiatives have had on the community and the DDR process.

Once efforts are made to build and strengthen social capital, the CIT programme, and similar programmes that come after it, can then strive toward creating economic and social reintegration initiatives for the ex-prisoner and former combatant community. Thus, contributing to ensuring that the DDR process in Northern Ireland is more reconciliatory, with a view toward a positive peace.

There are certainly learnings from this case that can be applied to other post conflict societies that are implementing a DDR process. Much of the literature on DDR talks about the state, or international donors, parachuting in programmes that worked in other post-conflict societies, not taking contextual factors into account. The CIT programme offers a unique framework, whereby it is a government funded programme, but the design, and implementation is community-centric. This was actualised through an exceptional consultation phase, lasting 12 months, seeking the community's opinion on what needs to happen in their areas. According to the interviewees, many of the participants were not aware that it was a government-led programme, which was important for community buy-in as many of these communities harbour a distrust toward the state, as a result of the preceding conflict. This could prove a vital DDR tactic to be used in other post conflict societies, especially where one, or multiple, sides of the conflict do not place their trust in the government. In addition to securing community buy-in, this hybrid model takes contextual factors of each individual community into account. This heightened level of personalisation ensures meaningful and effective projects are being carried out in the communities, further enhancing the possibility of successful reintegration, and overall reconciliation.

Furthermore, at the beginning of this thesis it was highlighted that there has been little, to no, research conducted on how grassroots initiatives can contribute to reducing the coercive control that paramilitary groups have over the communities in which they operate. This thesis has provided a detailed report as to how grassroots initiatives, under the CIT programme, aim to do this. The strategies identified in this thesis; building community autonomy, using diversionary methods, and applying generational work can be adopted by other post conflict societies dealing with continued paramilitarism, as a guideline, whilst also taking contextual factors into account. Additionally, this debate on how grassroots initiatives contribute to tackling paramilitarism can be expanded through future research conducted in post conflict societies, identifying whether other comparable programmes contain similar traits to that of CIT, and whether they offer alternate ideas on how to address this societal problem.



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## Appendixes

### Appendix 1

#### CBO Representative Questions

1. How long has the initiative been running?
2. How do you implement this initiative?
3. What is the societal issue the initiative is trying to solve?
4. What is the long term change you see as your goal?
5. What are the measurable effects of your work? (E.g., Wider participation throughout the community)
6. What are the wider benefits? (E.g., Keeping young people away from paramilitaries)
7. What have been the challenges of implementing such an initiative?
8. Are there certain aspects you feel you could do better?
9. Do you have good relationships with Actors such as state/funders/programme organisers?
10. Are there other initiatives that are doing similar work in your community?
11. Is it a state run program or are the state somewhat involved? If so, would you say it is an advantage or disadvantage? (In relation to community participation)
12. Is there any former paramilitaries or ex-prisoners involved in the implementation of your program? If not, why?
13. Have you noticed a difference in paramilitary activity in the community since the implementation of the Fresh Start agreement in 2016? (E.g., better or worse?)
14. Are there any specific strategies your initiative uses to try and tackle the issue of paramilitary activity in the community? (i.e. workshops specifically dealing with paramilitary groups)
15. Do you think civil society, and community-based initiatives more specifically, have played an acceptable role in dealing with paramilitarism in the communities, prior to the 2015 Fresh Start Plan?
16. How do you get the word out there about your initiative?
17. Do you think DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration) of paramilitaries has been implemented fully in NI?

## Appendix 2

### Professor Interview Questions

1. Could you tell me briefly about your research interests in NI?
2. How has civil society performed as a peacebuilder in Northern Ireland since GFA?
3. What is the relationship like between Top-down and Bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding in Northern Ireland like?
4. Has much reconciliation been directed towards paramilitaries, or ex-combatants, prisoners?
5. Why are paramilitaries still so prominent in communities in Northern Ireland?
6. What is it that attracts young people to paramilitaries?
7. You have done a lot of work on commemorations; do you feel some of these pass down trauma from older generations, and in some cases glorify being part of some of these groups?
8. I have seen you completed research on the Decommissioning process, the difficulties involved with it, and the significance of it. Could you tell me a bit about its significance and also do you think they are fully decommissioned today?

## Appendix 3

### Former Combatant Questions

1. Could you tell me who you are and what it is you do?
2. Are you aware of the Communities in Transition programme?
3. Has there been programmes like CIT before in terms of tackling paramilitary activity?
4. To the best of your knowledge were ex-prisoners or former combatants consulted in regards the implementation or structuring of this programme?
5. Could you tell me about some of the work ex-prisoners do in communities?
6. What has the reintegration of ex-prisoners' former combatants back into their communities been like since the Good Friday Agreement.
7. What role have community-based organisations played in reintegration?
8. How have the government performed in the area of aiding reintegration?
9. What is the relationship between all of these stakeholders (Ex-prisoners' groups, wider community, community-based organisations, funders, the government) in terms of reintegration?
10. What are the challenges that stand in the way of successful reintegration of ex-prisoners/former combatants?
11. What areas of reintegration could be done better?
12. What is the divide like between ex-prisoners or former combatants that want to reintegrate and reconcile, and those that wish to continue in paramilitary and crime?
13. How has the whole process DDR been carried out?
14. Why are paramilitaries still so prominent in communities in Northern Ireland?
15. Do you think paramilitaries have a future in the communities in Northern Ireland?
16. A lot of the interviews I have done talks about how paramilitaries and organised crime have become so intertwined now it's difficult to separate the two, do you think they can be?

17. Do you think CIT can be only successful with involving ex-prisoners/former combatants?

## Appendix 4

### List of Interviewees

Anonymous	Ashton Community Centre
Anonymous	Extern NI
Brendan Sturgeon	Queens University
Colin Halliday	Charter NI
Colin Moffet	TEO
Fra Halligan	Teach na Failte
Gareth	Gasworks Feile
Jonny Armstrong	NI Alternatives (STARS Initiative)
Keith	PSNI
Kris Brown	Ulster University
Lucy Geddes	Cooperation Ireland
Pete Wray	NI Alternatives (SAFE Initiative)
Sarah	NI Alternatives (START Initiative)
Sarah	NI Alternatives (DARE Initiative)