

Causeway

British - Irish Exchange
Youth Programme



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INTRODUCTION

The Causeway Programme was mandated by young people at the Encounter conference in Malahide, Dublin in 1997 and set out to add new impetus to efforts to raise the level of contact between the young people of the United Kingdom and Ireland, and between those who work with them. Causeway is recognised in a bilateral agreement between the governments of the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Among Causeway's aims are the development of better understanding and the improvement of the long-term relationship between the peoples of Ireland and the the United Kingdom. The spirit that underlies the programme is one of shared ownership and response to issues. The commitment of the two governments is demonstrated by their involvement in the management of the programme.

Causeway is administered by Léargas (Dublin) and the British Council (London) with the assistance of the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (Belfast). The three agencies have been actively involved in facilitating and supporting the international dimension in both the formal and non-formal education sectors and have an extensive record of North-South and international contact.



1

contact | understanding | relationships



OBJECTIVES



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The core objective of the Causeway Programme is to strengthen and improve the relationships between young people, and between those who work with them, on the islands of Britain and Ireland.

This is achieved by the provision of opportunities for:

- Increased communication and contact between young people
- Increased communication and contact between youth workers/leaders
- Enriching non-formal educational and personal development of young people
- Celebrating the coming together of each region.

The programme supports the following activities

Northern Ireland,
Ireland, England,
Scotland and Wales

exchanges | contacts | activities

3

Youth Exchanges

An Exchange involves groups of young people from the United Kingdom and Ireland. They and their leaders develop programmes of activity focused on the objectives of the Causeway programme using a non-formal learning approach for skills development.

Contact Exchanges

A Contact Exchange offers the opportunity to build contact and co-operation between groups of young people and their leaders and to establish an environment that will lead to a working relationship involving young people in the planning and preparation of a longer Causeway exchange.

Special Projects

Special Projects are innovative projects promoting good practice and activities which will benefit young British and Irish people e.g.

- Training Events
- Job Shadowing
- Contact Making Seminars
- Study Visits
- Seminars



direction

impact

evaluation

DIRECTION

Key educational values of participation and empowerment are central to the approach adopted for the programme. Causeway aims to contribute to the improvement of relationships between young people, through supporting exchanges and other forms of encounter between young people and those who work on their behalf.

Underpinning the very broad criteria for access to the programme is the provision of the opportunity to enable the widest variety of interests to be addressed by young people. Causeway provides a platform to explore ways of broadening the range of issues around which young people from both islands collaborate and, ultimately, to contribute to diminishing misunderstandings that have existed.

IMPACT

Combating exclusion has emerged as a major theme addressed by exchange groups in Causeway. Practical organisational links have developed together with a greater understanding of the other side. The programme is progressing towards issues of identity and understanding. Young people's issues set the agenda. Conflict and identity issues are prioritised allowing groups to celebrate both their similarities and differences.

Citizenship is a lead item for developmental work with young people in the Causeway Programme. Disadvantaged young people are contributing to an active engagement in the process. Young people's issues and problems surface and young people and leaders can deal with them.



EVALUATION

There has been an independent evaluation of Causeway which has demonstrated the benefits for the young people who take part in the projects. To date the programme has funded 3,000 young participants and approximately 700 youth leaders in exchange activities alone.



Among the benefits to participants that have been identified and reported on, are improved tolerance and understanding, the elimination of stereotypes and a greater interest in civic participation and democracy.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

Causeway has begun to address the issue of the training deficit among youth leaders. Leaders need to be equipped to assist young people who are exploring difference. Workers can be intimidated by dealing with conflict resolution issues whose origins lie very deep. Even people who have overcome deep-seated prejudices often feel that they cannot show this in their own communities. To this end Causeway is committed to providing and developing training resources to enable projects to tackle difficult and challenging themes in their Causeway activities.



the future

Among our ideas for the future are:

- The development of a training strategy for the Causeway Programme. There should be a developing training curriculum in youth exchange, including identity work, conflict resolution and citizenship. The Peace II funded joint Training Programme for teachers and youth workers in youth exchange run by the NcompasS consortium, illustrating a need to continue the model beyond 2005 and to extend it to the whole of Ireland and the United Kingdom.
- Projects should be supported in achieving accreditation for the learning and skills acquired by young people and leaders throughout their Causeway projects.
- More post-exchange follow up work with young people. This would result in the learning benefits of the exchange experience being enhanced.
- To encourage greater levels of participation and impact for Causeway among young people.
- To cooperate with similar organisations and institutions with a shared interest in Causeway's objectives.



encourage | train | learn Project Examples

Special Project

Farney/Ligoniel Youth Group

A group of young people aged 15-17 years from areas of Belfast and Monaghan came together for a certified training programme in Active Citizenship to equip them with the skills which would enable them to get more involved in their communities. The young people also carried out a research project as part of the training which involved them determining the areas and method for research activity. The research report was launched in May 2004. The research focused on identifying the needs of young people and barriers they currently encountered with a view to providing solutions.

The level of personal development and increased self-confidence was identified by each of the young people. The religious differences between the Catholic group in the South and the Protestant group in the North gave rise to a lot of learning. They discovered that formal religion was not such an important issue for them, as it was not perceived as being connected to their beliefs. Issues of identity were addressed and the focus of the project was on "who we are" not "what we are".



direction | impact



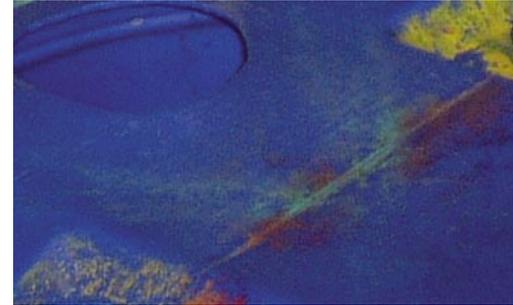
Young people identified specific changes in their behaviour as a result of their increased self-confidence which included:

- Better levels of listening
- Increased participation and engagement in the project
- Increased knowledge about their project and partners
- Better ability to take risks
- Increased levels of assertiveness
- Better ability to stand up for own values
- Better ability to control their more emotional reactions

Youth Exchange - West Lothian / Waterford Youth Theatre

West Lothian Youth Theatre, located in the suburbs of Edinburgh, is a long established youth theatre which provides drama training and workshops to those young people who live within a 30 mile radius of the service. Young people attend this project from a young age often staying until they reach their mid-teens. A group of lively and enthusiastic young people from West Lothian and Waterford created a partnership under Causeway to produce a joint performance.

The preparatory phases of the project required both groups to decide on the nature and content of the production. The exchange itself consisted of workshops, rehearsals and production of the show. The young people worked very long hours rehearsing in 3 hour sessions often working late into the evening. The initial workshops focused on getting the groups to bond. Drama has a natural advantage in this regard. Exercises and activities were used to create an open and friendly atmosphere in the group and promote strong friendships which still continue beyond the project.



The performance was a huge success. The whole group recognised the special nature of this exchange and are planning to take on another as soon as possible. One participant said:

"The people I've met and the things I've learned from them and from the drama part of the exchange will change the way I look at everything in life from now on. In the first four days of the exchange we all already became one big family and by the time we were ready to leave for Ireland for the second part of our exchange we were all incredibly close and didn't want to be separated for a second."





Youth Exchange - Children in Crossfire

A group of 20 young people of 16+ years from across both communities and a variety of social backgrounds in Northern Ireland came together for a residential programme under Causeway as a preparatory phase of a proposed trip to Kenya. The young people did not know each other and the residential was an opportunity for the group to bond. They explored diversity from a starting point of those issues which unite people. This was a first step to dealing with more contentious issues within the group. Poverty, HIV/AIDS, discrimination, prejudice and sectarianism were among the issues addressed.

Set against the challenging circumstances of the everyday lives of the Kenyan people the views of the group thawed dramatically. The experience challenged their assumptions and preconceptions about life and caused them to reflect on all those positive things about their own lives which they took for granted. They recognised that Kenyan people survived in the face of adversity and in spite of very poor conditions they were a happy people. The group developed a shared opinion on life in Kenya and began to recognise how much more alike they were as a group of people than different from each other.



reflect | experience

opinions | attitudes | common

The development of shared or common opinions and values was hugely accelerated because of an external context which united the young people beyond their differences.

Young people talked about how their attitudes moved from 'divided' to 'common' when pitched against the plight of the Kenyans. The issues of conflict which existed between members of the Irish group ceased to be relevant in an environment where survival was the key issue.

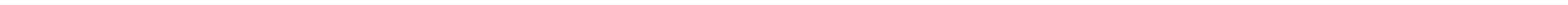


“I still don’t agree with you,
but I’ve learned to respect
your opinion”



Causeway would like to thank all of its projects for allowing the use of photos, quotes and case studies in this publication





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