



*Community
Powered Change:
Telling stories,
growing ideas*



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At Amplify NI we go on a journey with people to take action together, creating fairer communities where everyone can thrive.

We believe everyone can make a difference, and that positive social change happens when people from every part of society are involved.

We bring people together to:

- Listen to their lived experiences of inequality by spending time with them in their own places
- Help them develop ideas for improving their communities
- Create, support and grow innovative projects, collaborations, and campaigns to make change happen

Our approach is not just working here in Northern Ireland it's spreading across the world! By helping people to act together we can make our communities better places to live and work.

Amplify NI is powered by the Young Foundation and funded by National Lottery players through the Big Lottery.



FOREWORD

The force behind the work of the Young Foundation is our passion to fight the widespread and complex inequalities that exist in our society today. We do this through research; work with communities and supporting the growth of social innovations. We work on a national and international level to create insight and innovations which put people at the heart of social change.

The Amplify NI programme is the very embodiment of our principles and methodology. It combines research and social innovations to reach diverse communities across Northern Ireland, supporting the process of healing divisions and creating a fairer society. Its holistic approach to achieving this brings together our expertise in social innovation and ethnographic research to identify shared values and amplify the voices which are often ignored. The programme treads carefully and listens deeply to people's experiences. It also helps to support social innovations created by these communities and empowers them to challenge the power dynamics that perpetuate social inequalities. By helping people to act together we can make our communities better places to live and work.

I am really proud of this programme and the wonderful work our staff have done with such inspiring people and the amazing results it has achieved so far. Thank you too to the Big Lottery for supporting this innovative and inspirational programme.

Glenys Thornton, Chief Executive, The Young Foundation.



AMPLIFY NI HAS DEVELOPED A TOOLKIT FOR HELPING COMMUNITIES AND INDIVIDUALS TO TAKE ACTION.

It is simple, practical and fun to use.

It helps people explain what they love about where they live and also to identify and act upon the things that need to change.

The approach is based on a technique called "appreciative inquiry". This is centred on the idea that peoples' thoughts are shaped by the questions that they are asked. When people are simply asked about the problems they face, the opportunities for change may seem daunting and limited.

However if we also ask people what they like about their community, what they value, what makes them proud, then we can more clearly see that positive change is already rooted in the great things that already exist. It is a very powerful technique, and it works.

We should all stop from time to time and ask ourselves what makes us smile about the place we live and what makes us proud to live there. It helps us understand the assets we have to build on.

Another technique we love is personification. This helps us understand the unique qualities of the place we live maybe its personality.



This is fun to do, and we can get more information by asking people what five words they would use to describe their community. By collecting as many responses as you can, you start to build a picture and it is often astonishing how often the same words crop up. There is often much more consensus than you would imagine.

We have also developed a framework to help people discuss how they can make their community a fairer place. Northern Ireland is a beautiful place, full of warm and generous and hard working people. However communities face stark inequalities and deprivation. Our framework helps people to understand the nature of the inequalities that exist so that we can act together to challenge them.

After that, we can talk about what inspires us and gives us energy, whether it be a place, a person or even a song. We need inspiration and energy to make change happen, we all have it, we just need to unlock it and put it to use. And when people are ready to act, we have more tools and techniques to help them make their hopes for the future a reality.

Get in touch with us if you would like to learn more about the Conversation toolkit and how to use it in your community.

- **Blick Studios, 51 Malone Rd, Belfast, BT9 6RY**
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So we ask questions like: if Belfast was a person what sort of clothes would it wear? Who would it be friends with, what would its hobbies be, what values would it hold? What are its main worries for the future? And what would its hopes and dreams be?

Our Research: Building shared understandings and taking action together



At the Young Foundation, we believe that inequality can be challenged. We also believe that everyone can actively bring about positive change. Through our research, we aim to combine insight and action in a way that makes a real impact for people and communities.

We seek to understand how people experience inequalities in their day-to-day lives, and to understand how the ideas that people have, the beliefs and values they hold, and the actions they take to challenge inequalities can help to create fairer places to live.

LEARNING WITH COMMUNITIES

At the heart of our methodology is:

- a belief that people's lived experiences have value and give them unique insights
- a recognition that people are capable of articulating this knowledge
- a commitment to celebrating and harnessing this knowledge to help generate community-led change

We use a people-centred approach to guide and encourage the articulation of values, priorities and aspirations. Our approach is ethnographic: a holistic and in-depth form of research which seeks to understand the experience of people and communities in their own terms, language, and from their own point of view.

We then use a collaborative, participatory process to apply this research, "co-creating" solutions with communities to support idea-generation and help put these ideas into practice.

Storytelling is a core part of this methodology. We believe that, throughout history, movements for social change have been based on strong shared narratives of transformation. Our aim is to uncover and amplify narratives of a better future, as well as new and positive narratives about the past and present. By harnessing these transformative narratives, we hope to bring

more people into the conversation and build connected movements of people working together for change.

INEQUALITY AND DISCONNECTION

The challenges that people face aren't just economic, but also social. Inequality can manifest in relationships between people, places, and resources. It can affect the opportunities and aspirations that people have and the services and support they access.

When people feel disconnected from places, resources, communities, and other people, it can create inequalities.

We found that disconnection can cause people to feel a lack of control over the things that affect their lives. Inequalities can also lead to disconnection and alienation. People shared how inequality caused them to feel disengaged and excluded from playing a meaningful part in their communities.

Disconnection can manifest in a place's physical layout, where busy roads make it difficult for people to reach different areas. Unequal development can also cause disconnect between areas of a town or city. However, disconnection is often social or psychological: people may feel that certain areas don't belong to them, that they would not be welcome in particular areas or buildings, or that there are boundaries between parts of the town that they should not cross.

One of our current strands of research focuses on understanding the different ways that disconnection manifests in Northern Ireland and how different forms of disconnection are linked to inequality.



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THE YOUNG FOUNDATION

Feeling disconnected in inner East Belfast

CASE STUDY



Sarah is a 43-year-old mother of two. She grew up and still lives in inner East Belfast, where she works as a part-time care worker. Even though her neighbourhood is physically close to the city centre and the Titanic Quarter, she feels socially disconnected from other parts of the city.

"They say that a rising tide lifts all boats, but you don't see much evidence for that round here. We feel very cut off from the development that's happening in other parts of the city. There's a lot of buzz about the Titanic Quarter and the Cathedral Quarter, but they could be a million miles from our neighbourhood for all the difference they've made to us."

Disconnection can impact on many aspects of people's lives. For Sarah, feelings of being cut off from the developments in other areas of Belfast makes her feel unable to access the opportunities and resources they might offer. She would like to get a full time job, but would not feel comfortable working in other parts of the city.

"I don't think the Titanic Quarter is for the people of East Belfast. People come from outside the area to work there, not from here. I feel more comfortable working in my own neighbourhood."



Sarah worries about the future and whether her children will have to leave the area. She is concerned that young people in inner East Belfast feel isolated and unable to fulfil their potential unless they move away from the area.

"I want my children to have the best, but it's difficult when you're from around here. If you do well you leave the area. It can be a very lonely place for young people because it feels so cut off."

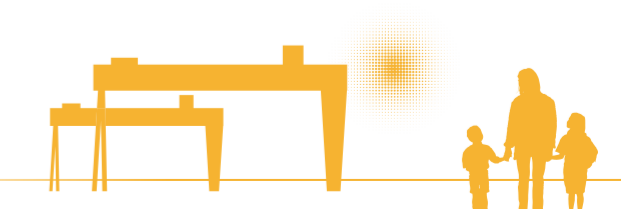
PEOPLE FORGING CONNECTIONS

People do not passively accept the inequalities and disconnections in their lives and communities. In all of the communities we work with, a growing number of people are taking action to break down divisions, challenge unfairness and build connections to help create fairer places to live.



We found that where communities lack services or resources, people may build alternative connections and networks of support. Connected people and communities can share resources and take action together to achieve common goals.

Our research aims to understand and support these connections, as well as amplifying the narratives which help bring people together. We also seek to understand intergenerational connections and the ways in which a younger generation of community workers and activists view those who came before.



Taking action in Derry / Londonderry



Community workers and activists describe how it is the previous generations that pave the way for the new generations. There is a real sense of pride in the people, the communities, and the connections that make Derry / Londonderry unique.

A local youth worker in Derry spoke of the underground web of connections between women who “kept this town going during the Troubles.” These women, feminists with or without the label, were the movers and the shakers. And they are still out there, happy to help with anything from making a connection to helping with an allotment project. They have so much to give.

“These women were the soul of the community sector. The true value of the community and voluntary sector is about passion and care. This is the real centre, where the magic happens.”

Many people fear that these values are getting lost and deprioritised by the government, funders and even sections of the community sector. Yet, there is a generation of young people who are energetic and want to carry on the flame.

*“Standing on the shoulders of giants.”
Unsung, local heroes, who have been slogging away for years, chipping away at the discrimination in this town, most often with little or no recognition, are giants in the eyes of the next generation.*



A local queer activist described how she sat in awe idolising the older queers at a fundraiser because she knew just how much they had gone through to be out and proud in Derry. She felt “taken in” by them and before she knew it, she was helping organise local events with them.

Taking action is about being inspired and inspiring others. In the LGBT scene in Derry, experiences are changing rapidly, but there is an intergenerational connection.

“We are all in the same boat, in a few years’ time the next generation of queers are going to get involved in the festivals and them guys are going to meet all the people from the queer community. Just like me, they will be friends with the people who have been fighting for queer liberation in Derry for 40 years. I want the next generation to stay here.”

CONNECTING & INCLUDING THE UNHEARD VOICES

We believe all kinds of people should be able to tell their stories and put forward their ideas for change. We seek to hear the “unheard voices” – the stories and perspectives of people who are often ignored and even dismissed by decision-makers and influencers. When people feel that their voices aren’t being listened to, or that their lived experiences don’t matter, they can feel undervalued, socially disconnected, and politically disengaged.

Through our research, we aim to engage and value people who feel disconnected, and help them overcome the barriers to feeling recognised and valued.

Amplifying the unheard voices in Enniskillen



“We Kilimuckers [local slang word for the housing estates] agree that it would be good to have something written about the area’s bonfire tradition.”

This was the unanimous conclusion of all of the dozen or so older ones involved in continuing the 40-year-old Halloween bonfire tradition in the tightly knit housing estates of Kilmacormick in north Enniskillen. They left the Saturday morning pub meeting contented so long as they were to be actively involved in the writing up of their story.

Earlier – in the weeks running up to the bonfire – two lads with blackened faces and mud all over their clothing and boots stood closely together on heaps of bonfire material and declared: “We know you, you’re a Ledwith! So you should know the score on these bonfires from your Cornagrade estate days. We would be wary of someone we didn’t know!”

Ensuring free access amongst seasoned bonfire builders was akin to me having a new passport stamped. Group conversations and one-to-one chats then ensued in houses, pubs, the bonfire site, and within the makeshift pallet-constructed bonfire hut (which was torched the year previously) to get into the mindsets of a sub culture which had neither been explored nor written about in any grandiose social history book of the town.

Gaining the relational, “local” trust and showing a real interest in the wholly informal groupings, the “unreachable” bonfire builders who were in the past seemingly “at war” with any regulatory body that came about the place all pointed towards their unheard story being actually listened to, and indeed, to getting it off their chests. In other words, being valued and recognised!

For Raymond, “Building the bonfire gets us out of the house, it gets us friends together and we make new friendships. By doing it every year ‘it grows on us.’ It’s just something we do. It’s no good sugar coating this, what drives me is the friendship. Give any of us £50 quid each and we wouldn’t do it. We do this for the area and as a group. And this is better than Christmas, this is. For us it’s keeping up a tradition.

“We don’t want any pressure nowadays on the young ones who watch us building and we have intervened to stop them stoning the peelers [PSNI] or stealing or causing any havoc. Our bonfire keeps them young ones away from breaking windies [windows] and there is no flags, no drugs no drink allowed!

Since about five years now there is ones giving us praise, the PSNI, like! They drive in here and come up and chat and there is one police man, real civil like – about the whole lot!”

The Young Foundation’s under the radar, ethnographic approach aims to gain the confidence of young adults and uncover their stories; from past negativity to present positive narratives of engagement with the wider area. People now come from all parts of the town to watch the bonfire, and this is a human story waiting to be told.



TAKING ACTION TOGETHER

The strength, values, and expertise that people bring through their lived experience are often the basis of positive social change. Ultimately, the aim of our research is to build on these shared understandings to take action and end inequality together.

Our research findings into connections and disconnections in Northern Ireland will be published at the end of 2017.

Our Accelerator: Supporting community-led innovations tackling social inequalities



ACCELERATING ACTION TOGETHER

Our Accelerator programme is one way that we support the development of social innovations that have been initiated by people in communities, to address social issues and inequalities, or build on the strengths and assets that exist in them. Over the course of the programme, participants are able to develop their project or organisation by:

- Meeting and working with other people who are leading projects, campaigns, or enterprises that make their communities fairer places to live;
- Develop an appropriate social business model that clearly demonstrates the purposes of your project or idea, and why it is needed;
- Learn about collaborative design methods that can help you to shape and develop your idea or project with others;
- Plan how you can harness the support of wider networks and partners and co-create solutions with the people who benefit from what you do.

We believe in the importance and potential of community-led initiatives in leading and delivering meaningful and sustainable change. Amplify NI are committed to equipping people with the skills, networks and tools that they need to create and maximise positive social impact in communities.

Our community-led approach is currently being carried out in conjunction with Belfast City Council's locality planning work across four key areas – Whiterock, Inner East, Belvoir and Milltown, and New Lodge. We are working alongside residents, stakeholders and the Council to support residents in co-designing and delivering socially innovative solutions to issues in their community. Belfast City Council are exploring this 'Belfast Challenge' model with the aims being to:

- Test new ways for the Council to work directly with residents and local partners;
- Build skills and capacity within local communities;
- Provide learning and insights with regards to how we deliver better services in partnership with residents, partners, and statutory bodies, within a local area.



CASE STUDY

Gortilea Social Farm

Gortilea Social Farm is a working family farm in Claudy owned by Seamus and Susan Mullan.

It welcomes people of all abilities including those with learning difficulties and people who have had issues with their mental health.

They become farmers for the day, learn animal husbandry skills, rural crafts and how to grow and cook healthy food, and go to market. They can even get a range of qualifications which helps them into the workplace. All in a supportive environment where every task has a real purpose.

Participants are helped to develop their softer skills too, so that they can thrive in the workplace and many move on to work placements.

Recently, the resident Occupational Therapist, Seamus and Susan's daughter Clare McMonagle, has opened Northern Ireland's first hippotherapy clinic on the farm. Hippotherapy is therapy using the movement of horses. It can create neurological changes that improve a person's postural control, strength, and coordination.

Clare uses Gortilea to help young children on the autistic spectrum, with remarkable results. They are assisted into the saddle, and supported whilst on horseback. She sees it as a three dimensional sensory experience for them because the horse moves forward and back, from side to side and up and down when moving.

"It is such a natural thing to do and it costs a fraction of conventional therapies," she says.

Gortilea Social Farm is a pioneer which is attracting a lot of attention far and wide and is set to be the first of many. It uses resources we already have to make a real difference to peoples' lives.



CASE STUDY

The CLARE Project

The CLARE Project based in North Belfast is all about looking out for older and vulnerable people within the community and helping to keep them safe and well.

It is a simple model that has great potential for helping people to retain their independence for as long as possible, and at the same time strengthening communities and helping people find work.

It is also creating great excitement not just in Northern Ireland but across the UK. It was the first project in Northern Ireland to receive support from the Big Society Fund, and is part funded by the Public Health Agency. Many are already seeing the CLARE concept as one that should be rolled out across many other communities.

CLARE was set up by Mount Vernon Community Development Forum after wide-ranging research. Home care services might meet some basic needs, but what do older and vulnerable people actually want? What can local people do to help them, and could they get a project up and running that would address these issues and save public money by avoiding unnecessary stays in hospitals and residential homes?

"What emerged was a project based on what older people themselves said they wanted and what others in the community said they would like to do to help."

Crucially the project was devised in the community with strong input both from service users and volunteers and sets out to address social need which existing provision is not reaching.

It has the added benefit of introducing volunteers to health care, improving their employability.

Social Innovation in the Republic of Ireland



Social innovation is in its infancy in the Republic. It is disjointed, with little joined up thinking on adding value via economic and societal development. We do however have clear areas of development through; public sector, intermediary organisations, digital social innovation, research and corporate social innovation.

Local government understands the importance of public sector social innovation for economic growth within local communities. An example is Dublin City Council's community-led social innovation to solving community issues, Beta Projects. Beta Projects commenced as a trial by the City Architects department in 2012 and ceased in December 2016.

Intermediary organisations are those organisations that have a role to play in supporting social innovations and facilitating growth. Examples include:

- *Young Social Innovators* which – promotes education for social innovation.
- *Social Entrepreneurs Ireland* – which seeks out social entrepreneurs who have the most potential for impact.
- *Social Innovation Fund Ireland* which provides growth capital and support to the best social innovations.
- *ChangeX* – a platform of proven innovations from across the world – building a community of change makers.



Digital Social Innovation is also growing here. One example is SMART Dublin, an initiative of the four Dublin local authorities to engage with smart technology providers, researchers and citizens to solve city challenges and improve city life.

Universities in the Republic are playing a large part through social innovation research, Examples include: developing and testing processes for co-creating open, innovative and impactful digital public services and reducing isolation and loneliness in youth.

Corporate Social Innovation in the Republic is not officially recognised by government or the business sector. Instead Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is advocated and developed by Business in the Community, and supported by Government.

Social innovation is progressing, albeit in a fragmented manner. Learning needs to be taken from other countries with who are further advanced. There is so much to be gained from shared learning to co-design, co-develop and launch policies and associated ecosystems that add value to our existing economic and social structures, and ultimately work to advance our communities for the benefit of our citizens.

By Fiona Descoteaux CEO of Innovate Dublin

Social innovation is an effective way of responding to social challenges, by mobilising people's creativity to develop solutions and make better use of scarce resources.

It involves not just new ideas but the remaking and reuse of existing ideas. Social innovations can take the form of a new service, initiative or organisation, or alternatively, a radically new approach to the organisation and delivery of services. Social Innovations are not only good for society but also enhance society's capability to act. The need for social innovation applies just as much to the Republic of Ireland as Northern Ireland, and, for that matter, anywhere else.

The financial crisis of 2008 has changed our social infrastructures immeasurably. With funding and resources for public spending at an all-time low, we are seeing a reorganisation of both wealth and power on a grand scale. Central and local governments are increasingly working with the private sector, and new forms of partnership are growing to achieve efficiency and value for the public. The crisis has seen a polarisation of wealth among the few, which is impacting on how cities, systems and environments are being designed.

The openness and transparency afforded to the public by technology has the dual effect of making planners and decision makers more accountable and giving citizens more opportunity to get involved in decision-making.

In the Republic of Ireland we have no official policy or leadership from Government in social innovation. However, several Ministers and their departments have supported the work of social innovation organisations.

The Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton has been an advocate of the work of both Young Social Innovators and The Social Innovation Fund. Whilst the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, Simon Coveney has championed the work of the newly launched Social Innovation Fund.



Amplifying Business: A New Frontier



Businesses in the 21st century are under increasing pressure to rise to stakeholder expectations, increase transparency and identify new sources of growth.

As the severity and complexity of societal problems has grown, Government is increasingly looking to business to help to address them. This would involve reconnecting business success with social progress. This approach has been lost in decades of narrow management approaches, short term thinking and greed under "Free Market Ideology."

There's nothing new about businesses striving for both economic and social impact. Many of the great Victorian enterprises, like Cadbury's and Unilever were set up precisely to achieve this. However, by the end of the 20th century shareholder primacy came to dominate thinking and many companies had lost that social edge focusing on the financial bottom line as opposed to the "triple bottom line" (social, environmental and financial).

But does business have a legitimate role in tackling the many and varied social issues such as youth unemployment, rising levels of antisocial behaviour and mental health? Many argue "there is only one social responsibility of business, to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits" or more simply "the business of business is business".

In recent years this myopic view of shareholder value has changed and, in reality, companies can no longer afford to monitor only the obvious social impacts of today. Without a careful process for identifying evolving social effects of tomorrow, firms may risk their very survival.

The Young Foundation has been investigating how business can help to tackle inequality. We have now developed a new "Connected Social Innovation" methodology. It will support organisations to recalibrate, collaborate and rewire their organisations to become new "Connected Social Innovators".



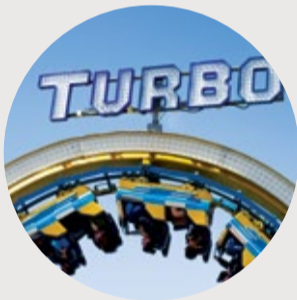
The majority of businesses are socially outward looking and many have been focused over a long period of time delivering on a wider social agenda alongside their bottom line. From the Victorian pioneers to millennial start-up companies there has been acknowledgement that an organisation needs a "Purpose." Yet many find that the greatest impediments to this promise of social, environmental and economic progress are the internal barriers and lack of permission to innovate that prevent companies from taking action.

This new "Connected Social Innovation" model will use a range of tools that will enable business leaders to engage with their staff and local communities to identify a common purpose and set in motion a process that will build this new thinking into all levels of an organisation

Over the past few decades many people have grown to view the interests of society as being very different to the interests of business and indeed businesses themselves rarely perceive themselves as agents of social change. However, this is changing and there is a convergence of interests occurring among large global corporates who are connecting business success with social progress leading to the Young Foundation developing this new model to create the environment for these new "Connected Social Innovators."

Roger Warnock
Amplify NI





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