

Vision & plan

Paper 2¹

The Community and International Trauma & Peace Building Centre

This document - The vision

This is the second of two Papers which set out details of the proposals for the development of a Community & International Trauma & Peace Building Centre based in Omagh, Co. Tyrone, Northern Ireland. Paper 1 contains specific proposals on the arrangements for the proposed centre, the staffing needed to take it forward and provide the services it would offer, costings and funding proposals. This document (Paper 2) sets out the philosophical and historical context for the proposal, and describes in some more detail the services offered through the centre, and the benefits it would bring.

THE VISION IN THE CONTEXT OF PEACE BUILDING

the tasks of PEACE building

Peace is an outcome of actions; the actions of addressing conflict and constructing the arrangements that lead to peace. John Paul Lederach, Professor in conflict resolution studies at the Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia is well acquainted with the conflict in Northern Ireland. He has formulated a framework for understanding and addressing civil conflict, which is pertinent to the proposals contained in this paper. He

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identifies 4 'pillars' or dimensions to the civic and political processes which are necessary for peace building. They are:

1. the socio-economic pillar
2. the socio-political pillar
3. the socio-psychological pillar, and
4. the spiritual pillar

Each of these pillars embrace tasks which need to be undertaken as part of the peace building 'project'. These are summarised in the following figure (Figure 1).

Lederach's 4 pillars

the socio-economic	the socio-political	the socio-psychological	the spiritual
financial aid re-training employment development	demobilisation disarming integration of 'troops' professionalising	identity self-esteem emotions grief process trauma	healing encounter - 'self' and 'other' acknowledge forgive

Figure 1

One other aspect of Lederach's work is relevant. He talks about the trans-generational consequences of civil conflict and of how 'overcoming' conflict is a long term project. Failure to take on board this observation, could lead to premature shifts of focus, with a process, centrally driven, moving on before any dimension has been fully able to play its part and make its contribution.

In the context of this paper Lederach's pillars focussing on the socio-psychological and the spiritual are clearly the most relevant. From his analysis it can be concluded that activating the socio-psychological and spiritual responses are essential parts of the peace building project, just as important as the economic and socio-political dimensions. Importantly, the 'project' of peace building needs to be seen over the long term.

The following illustrates the range of issues that fall within the Socio-psychological pillar.

1. Identity & self-esteem

- needs identification
- capacity building
- strategy development
- identification of victims who are not represented by groups
- awareness raising
- training and skills development

2. Emotions & grief process

- grief support and services
- emotional support and befriending
- awareness raising
- training and skills development (e.g. Competent Helper courses)
- public education and discussion

3. Trauma

- identifying the range of traumatic experiences and needs arising from the conflict
- raising awareness about trauma in the wider public, amongst key groups, churches, employers etc.
- training
- ensuring people have information about where to get help for themselves or their families
- therapies which address traumatic problems
- therapeutic networks

The link with the Spiritual pillar is also very relevant, as demonstrated time and again by the work undertaken in Omagh in the past two years. The objectives described under the Spiritual heading (healing, encounter - 'self' and 'other', acknowledge, forgive) are significantly complimentary to the objectives described above.

Making and building peace is not just a political task. At its core is relationships. There are dangers in placing confidence in a political settlement which is not underpinned by real transformations in relationships. It is often the old warriors who, tiring of war, want to make peace. The fireside 'combatants' often want it to continue, viewing it as an heroic necessity. Coming behind is a new generation, which if imbued with the old hatreds, can see conflict leap a generation to re-ignite at some point in the future. Such has been the history of Ireland and the Balkans. There is a task to be done therefore in addressing the hurts of the past and facilitating the reshaping of future relationships.

The significance of this analysis is that working to address the human consequences of the conflict is not an optional extra, but should be viewed and valued as an integral part of the peace building project. Put another way, peace will be harder to achieve, if we do not address the human , and

specifically the psychological and spiritual dimensions of our experiences. The temptation to set aside the hurts and agony of the past, often yielded to for noble reasons, would be counter productive

THE BACKGROUND

The bigger picture

The Omagh bombing happened four months after the Good Friday Agreement (The Belfast Agreement) was concluded (10th April 1998). The parties to the Agreement looked ahead to the anticipated Report of the Commission on the views and needs of those affected by the Troubles. The Good Friday Agreement included the following statement:

Reconciliation and Victims of Violence

The participants believe that it is essential to acknowledge and address the suffering of the victims of violence as a necessary element of reconciliation. They look forward to the results of the work of the Northern Ireland Victims Commission.

It is recognised that victims have a right to remember as well as to contribute to a changed society. The achievement of a peaceful and just society would be the true memorial to the victims of violence. The participants particularly recognise that young people from areas affected by the troubles face particular difficulties and will support the development of special community-based initiatives based on international best practice. The provision of services that are supportive and sensitive to the needs of victims will also be a critical element and that support will need to be channeled through both statutory and community-based voluntary organisations facilitating locally-based self-help and support networks. This will require the allocation of sufficient resources, including statutory funding as necessary, to meet the needs of victims and to provide for community-based support programmes.

The participants recognise and value the work being done by many organisations to develop reconciliation and mutual understanding and respect between and within communities and traditions, in Northern Ireland and between North and South, and they see such work as having a vital role in consolidating peace and political agreement. Accordingly, they pledge their continuing support to such organisations and will positively examine the case for enhanced financial assistance for the work of reconciliation. An essential aspect of the reconciliation process is the promotion of a culture of tolerance at every level of society, including initiatives to facilitate and encourage integrated education and mixed housing. (End of extract)

We Will Remember Them

This Report was prepared by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield after several months' consultations with those affected by violence, and with other interests. Sir Kenneth described the intensity and impact of the violence in human terms and teased out those needs which were being expressed to him in his consultations, and pointed a way forward on key issues. His recommendations are contained in Appendix 1.

Living with the Trauma of the Troubles

We Will Remember Them also drew attention to the report of the Social Services Inspectorate, *Living with the Trauma of the Troubles*, which was published in April 1998. This report examined the nature and level of services being provided by mainly statutory social services and made a series of recommendations, which Bloomfield's Report commended and carried as an appendix. The recommendations of the SSI Report are reproduced in Appendix 2 of this document.

THE OMAGH EXPERIENCE

As the Omagh tragedy happened in the period immediately following the Good Friday Agreement and in the wake of the Bloomfield Report, this meant that the context for those affected by the bombing was significantly changed from that which preceded the Agreement. For the first time there was both a formal and political recognition of the breadth and width of the impact of violence. This on one hand, established expectations of what might be provided to meet the needs arising from the bombing, and on the other hand enabled the agencies and organisations concerned with serving the Omagh community to establish and provide a significant response.

The experiences of the wider Omagh community, and its statutory, voluntary, community and private organisations and sectors have resulted in key revelations, pertinent to Omagh and perhaps to our wider community. These include:

1. the personal and community impacts of the tragedy;
2. the social and economic impact of a major community tragedy;
3. the re-discovery of the importance of *community*;
4. the place of faith and the churches, and the spiritual life of the community;
5. the place of art and symbolism;
6. the identification with the tragedy as demonstrated in the participation in community events, and
7. the expression of need demonstrated in the seeking of help by hundreds of individuals.

the response to the TRAUMA experienced by the COMMUNITY

The needs arising from the bombing were addressed by a wide range of initiatives. This included:

- the work of the churches and members of other faiths in leading the funerals, the Act of Reflection and the First Anniversary ceremonies;

- the work of the community sector in taking soundings, stabilising, informing and securing services for local people;
- the work of the voluntary 'helping and caring' organisations in putting services on the ground, being accessible and offering a range of options for local people;
- the leadership of the Omagh District Council through public ceremonies and events, and the promotion of activities that would facilitate the acknowledgement of the tragedy and the expression of support;
- the response of the education sector in supporting schools, teachers, children and parents and in identifying needs;
- the work of the media in articulating the tragedy and its personal and wider consequences;
- the business and commercial sector through the incorporation of events and responses sensitive to the feelings of the community;
- the work of the health & social services in providing a range of hospital, rehabilitatory, primary care, mental health and trauma services;
- the studies undertaken to better understand the emotional and psychological consequences of the bombing;
- the everyday acts of kindness and neighbourliness by individuals and groups, from within and beyond the Omagh community.

With regard to the psychological and emotional consequences of the bombing a number of services and initiatives were established to provide support to the wider Omagh community (and in some cases, beyond). The work of the Sperrin Lakeland Trust in providing a trauma and community recovery service highlighted a range of needs and observations, including:

- the need for acknowledgment
- the changing needs of individuals and the community over time
- making services accessible, acceptable and flexible to address need
- the benefits of early assessment and intervention
- the hope of improvement and progress even after a prolonged experience of trauma
- the specific difficulties of addressing the needs of children where experience and studies suggest a significant hidden need
- the significant role of education services and schools
- the place of ritual, symbolism and ceremony and the contribution of health and social services in affirming and enabling such expression
- the role of the *community* and its constituent parts
- the benefits of accurately assessing the impact in the early stages so that responses can be shaped and quantified accordingly
- working effectively with the media in a mature partnership for the benefit of those affected by the bombing and the wider community
- the impact subsequent tragedies have on re-awakening past traumas.

The STUDIES into the IMPACT of the bombing

The Sperrin Lakeland Trust undertook a number of studies into the impact of the bombing and monitored the impact of its interventions. These studies revealed that significant groups of people who were close to the tragedy (of the order of 25% and in some groups, much higher) suffered an identifiable psychological 'injury' or what is usually referred to as a psychological trauma. Such reactions have had at times very serious emotional, personal and social consequences for individuals and their families. The studies and the work undertaken to treat and support people reveal very important lessons about the nature and consequences of traumatic events, and indicate important lessons for the longer term support of people who have been affected by the Troubles in general.

Before and since August 1998, many people have suffered through other acts of violence, intimidation, threat and harassment. Many lives have been distorted and shaped by tragedy. Opportunities have been missed and things left undone. Alongside the tragedy of the Troubles are the personal struggles and tragedies of everyday life. The lessons learnt in the wake of the Omagh bombing, including lessons learnt about what interventions can best help, point clearly to the need to address the longer term consequences of the Troubles, as a humanitarian response to suffering and as a contribution to peace building.

the role of the SPIRITUAL

On 3 occasions, the first, three days after the bombing, the second afterwards on the occasion of the Act of Reflection, and the third on the occasion of the First Anniversary, tens of thousands of people came on to the streets of Omagh in response to the opportunity to express their feelings and hopes through what were profoundly spiritual events. The desire of people to get in touch with, to express and even talk about things of the heart and soul is a significant insight into the needs and the potential of a community in the face of tragedy. This, along with the leadership of local clergy and faith leaders suggests there is further potential to build upon Lederach's fourth Spiritual pillar, though which issues of acknowledgement, the question of forgiveness, the understanding of victimhood, the dialogue between 'me' and 'you' and the issue of accountability could be explored with a view to making a contribution to personal and community peace.

PROPOSALS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL AND COMMUNITY TRAUMA & PEACE BUILDING CENTRE

Paper 1 set out the business dimensions of the proposals along with a very brief overview of the range of services that would be provided through the proposed centre. This section sets out in more detail the proposals, drawing upon the context described above, and in response the broadly felt desire on the part of the wider Omagh community to see some significant, long term, positive initiative that would:

1. meet the on-going needs arising from the bombing;
2. address other local needs including the longer term needs of those affected by the violence of the past, and,
3. reach out to others in response to the generosity shown to Omagh in the aftermath of the bombing.

the KEY elements

Drawing the above analyses together a proposal is now made for the development of a major centre, based in Omagh, which can make a significant contribution to dealing with the consequences of our conflict, and specifically to addressing the psychological and related consequences for individuals and communities, chiefly in the west of Northern Ireland. The building blocks of such a proposal would include the following.

- POST TRAUMA SERVICES
- PEACE BUILDING SERVICES
- TRAINING & EDUCATION
- RESEARCH & CONSULTANCY

These elements would, together, form an integrated and complimentary framework of services and initiatives, as illustrated below:



Figure 2

the VALUES

The initiative would be underpinned by a number of values to reflect its origins, its objectives and the dignity in keeping with the circumstances from which it arose. These include:

1. the objectives and priorities of the centre would be founded chiefly on humanitarian values;
2. the services provided would be characterised by the highest standards and based on evidence based practice and outcomes;
3. the services would reflect local need and priorities and be in keeping with regional policies on the needs of victims of violence;
4. the research and needs assessments would be designed to be in keeping with ethical standards with the primary objective of advancing learning and informing practice;
5. the centre would operate in a spirit of openness and accessibility;
6. the centre would aim to support and work alongside existing services to promote the best interests of service users;
7. the centre would place a particular focus on the needs of children and their families.

the DETAILED proposals

1. POST TRAUMATIC SERVICES

This would involve a range of professional services which would be made available to the public, to address post traumatic stress disorder and related conditions. The principal intervention would be cognitive therapy, backed up by a range of complimentary assessment, treatment and supportive services. Links would be established with other agencies such as health and social services, to ensure that the person seeking help is properly assessed and supported. The centre would seek to establish networks of treatment and support, linking with the statutory, voluntary, community and private organisations involved in health and social care, related services.

The experiences of Omagh highlighted the contribution of the spiritual dimension for the individual dealing with crises. To that end the centre would promote the complimentary use of spiritual and religious understandings and frameworks to assist individuals in dealing with the challenge of trauma and the transitions it requires. This dimension of the centre's work would become a resource of the churches and other religious organisations, opening up the possibility of providing trauma support and training to clergy and others involved in the religious sphere.

The centre would aim to address the trauma associated with the Troubles, both of the recent and the distant past. Recognising that political stability will not necessarily bring the absence of violence, the centre would aim to understand and address the changing patterns of violence that will emerge in the future.

The services would also be available to people traumatised by other traumatic events, e.g. personal assaults, rape, car accidents etc.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Education and training would be provided at a range of levels including:

1. personal education programmes as part of treatment and therapy programmes with individuals;
2. training and education for key community professionals (such as GPs, nurses, social services staff, PAMs² staff etc.);
3. training and education for voluntary, community and victim support groups;
4. training and education for employers and employees;
5. publications etc. to increase public awareness;
6. the provision of accredited training programmes at post graduate and advance levels in conjunction with educational institutions.

Training and related programmes would include:

- Competent helper programmes
- Understanding Trauma & therapeutic services
- Befriending & counselling
- Caring and good neighbourliness
- Trauma as a spiritual experience
- Appreciation of the culture of others
- Planning the assessment of needs and research
- Guidance and support for other communities which suffer tragedy
- Developing and promoting standards in the care and treatment of trauma

RESEARCH

Research would be central to the position of the proposed centre as a place of excellence, actively promoting high standards and advancing learning and skills. Drawing upon the experiences of the studies undertaken in the wake of the Omagh bombing and by working jointly with others, the centre would develop expertise in this field and assist others, including other communities affected by major tragedies to assess the needs arising therefrom.

² PAMs means Professions Allied to Medicine meaning services such as occupational therapy, physiotherapy etc.

CONSULTANCY

Again, drawing upon its experiences and its commitment to the highest standards of practice and skill, the centre would provide information, advice, support, training, strategic and policy guidance to other communities and organisations faced with major emergencies or which are planning for such emergencies. Strong humanitarian values would underpin this dimension of the centre's work.

2. PEACE BUILDING

Based upon the view that dealing with the trauma of the Troubles is an essential part of the task of establishing peace, the peace building dimension of the centre's work would focus upon practical steps to promote effective and working relationships between people and between groups. This would include the provision of mediation services to local people and the offering of alternatives to confrontation.

The centre would promote the gaining of awareness and skills in understanding difference and in mediating conflict. Areas of work would include:

- Relationship mediation
- Inter-community mediation
- Individual-Organisational mediation
- Inter-community mediation
- Parents & Children
- Parenting programmes
- Conciliation
- Alternatives to litigation
- Facilitating the Courts

Focussing on relationship building the centre would promote the following:

- Personal & group development
- 'Building bridges' programme
- Sharing our experiences
- The Omagh Churches Forum
- Awareness of the fears and hopes of others
- Healthy relationships
- Suicide prevention
- 'Being heard' programme
- Archive & remembrance
- Doing things together

Again, there would be a focus on Education & Training, Research and Consultancy, to underpin the peace building programmes, and to extend the aspiration for, the practice and the principles of, peace building into the wider community.

Peace building outcomes and the programmes associated with them were outlined in an earlier paper (The Omagh Project) and are set out in Appendix 3. These reflect the aims of the project to 'reach in' to Omagh to carry forward the work already underway, and to 'reach out' to other communities.

WHERE AND HOW?

The initiative would be based in Omagh and would have substantive links with adjacent communities. It would seek to promote services of the highest standards, and to add value to work already being undertaken in those areas to address trauma and conflict, to respond to requests for support, to promote training and research in relation to the consequences of the troubles and traumatic stress, and to stimulate initiatives that would further the aims of the initiative.

FUNDING

Paper 1 sets out proposals on the funding of the centre. The rationale for developing a centre which focuses on both the local and international scenes is to ensure that the virtuous circle of having a project that can appeal to key funders, and having the levels of staff and competency to provide the best possible service, can be achieved. In short, a proposal which fails to reach out to other communities, will not be able to attract the funding required to put the calibre of staffing in place, to provide even a local service. For the local community to benefit, there needs to be a wider focus.

Apart from the pragmatism of this argument, the aspiration to reach out is a heart felt desire by many affected by the Omagh bombing, who having benefited from the concern of others, want to support others, and to share the good things that have emerged from the tragedy of Omagh. So whilst the work undertaken for other communities and agencies, could contribute to the funding of the centre's work, humanitarian values would significantly influence its work priorities.