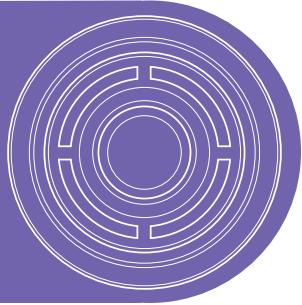


# RESOLVE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE SCHEME

A pre-accreditation inspection report

September 2016





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Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly under Section 49(2) of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 (as amended by paragraph 7(2) of Schedule 13 to The Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010) by the Department of Justice.

September 2016





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## List of abbreviations

<b>BCC</b>	Belfast City Council
<b>Charter NI</b>	The Charter for Northern Ireland organisation
<b>CJI</b>	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
<b>CRJI</b>	Community Restorative Justice Ireland
<b>DoJ</b>	Department of Justice
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>NIA</b>	Northern Ireland Alternatives
<b>NIHE</b>	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
<b>PSNI</b>	Police Service of Northern Ireland

## Definition

**The Protocol** “The Protocol for Community-Based Restorative Justice Schemes” was introduced in 2007. It applied to all cases where schemes dealt with criminal offences. These cases had to be passed via the police to the Public Prosecution Service, who could refer suitable low level offences back to schemes to be dealt with in accordance with the Protocol.



# Chief Inspector's Foreword

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) has undertaken pre-accreditation inspections of community restorative justice schemes since 2007.

Unlike the existing community restorative justice accredited schemes, Resolve is a relatively new arrival having been in operation for less than two years. It is also the first scheme to have emerged from the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) constituency and operates mainly in East Belfast.

Inspectors applied the same criteria and standards of previously inspected schemes and adopted the same methodology for this inspection.

Although this report identifies a challenge for both the Management Committee and the parent body Charter NI in terms of sustainability and makes several recommendations for improvement in respect of operational matters, Inspectors conclude that Resolve is doing good work in a challenging environment. None of the recommendations are unusual for a community scheme that is at such an early stage and working on a very low income.

Resolve currently meets the standards that are expected of non-government organisations which work with the criminal justice sector, and is therefore suitable to proceed to the next stage of accreditation.

This inspection was led by Tom McGonigle. I would like to thank all who contributed to this work.

**Brendan McGuigan**  
**Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice**  
**in Northern Ireland**

September 2016





# Executive Summary

Resolve personnel met with Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) in March 2015 to enquire about the procedure for an accreditation inspection. They subsequently made a formal request to the Department of Justice (DoJ) and the Department asked CJI to undertake this inspection in December 2015.

Inspectors visited Resolve's office on three occasions in February 2016. They conducted interviews with 25 people who had knowledge and experience of the scheme including representatives from statutory and voluntary organisations, local politicians and community leaders. Inspectors also sought evidence from case files, minutes of management committee meetings, staff reports, records of expenditure, personnel and training.

The criteria used for this inspection are derived from the United Nations '*Basic Principles on the use of Restorative Justice Programmes in Criminal Matters*'.

The Resolve scheme began in October 2014 and its management committee met formally for the first time in March 2015. The corporate architecture was unusual, though in line with the normal management arrangements which its parent body – the Charter for Northern Ireland (Charter NI) organisation – applied to a new project, and was accepted as appropriate by

the project funder. Charter NI employed the Resolve staff, provided its constitution and managed its finances and was represented on Resolve's management committee. However Resolve's operational practice was guided by its own management committee. Inspectors suggest the corporate governance structures of Resolve would require review to accommodate accreditation principles in the short to medium term.

Charter NI aimed "*To enable, equip and empower disconnected communities in East Belfast, Castlereagh, North Down and Ards to fully engage, integrate and benefit from the Northern Ireland peace process and the resulting social and economic regeneration.*" None of the other Charter NI projects was branded as a restorative justice scheme and Resolve was its first affiliate to seek formal accreditation.

Recent negative publicity about two senior Charter NI figures raised concern about the implications, including possible

reputational damage, for Resolve. This may require consideration at the next stage of the accreditation process, but does not impinge upon CJJ's assessment of its operation and integrity at local level.

Resolve was well-located and accessible to the community it served in inner East Belfast. The area was politically complex and fragmented and included a significant sectarian interface. The small premises used by Resolve were rented, in reasonable physical condition and secure.

Resolve's management committee was broad-based and comprised representatives from relevant statutory agencies and the local community. It met monthly and was providing effective corporate governance at the time of this inspection. Management committee minutes and reports evidenced a growing level of professionalism during the short period since inception. The scheme had access to expert advice when necessary, on matters of law and human rights, particularly from management committee members and other supporters such as academics.

There were two staff, both of whom were accredited Restorative Practitioners: the full-time Practitioner was an ex-prisoner who had a lengthy history of community work in East Belfast; and the part-time Practitioner was a recent graduate. Their different backgrounds and styles complemented each other well and they combined to make an effective team. They were supported by a small volunteer pool. Appropriate use was made of training opportunities. Any perceived political history that may have attached to the full-time Practitioner was not a barrier to participation by people with other political beliefs.

The full-time Practitioner made his contact details widely available and he was frequently requested to intervene in community tensions at weekends and evenings. Interviewees reported that he did so willingly and promptly.

There was a risk that the project could become personality-driven and overly-dependent on two people, particularly the full-time Practitioner. Resolve differed from the other two main restorative justice programmes in Northern Ireland (Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI) and Northern Ireland Alternatives (NIA)) because none of its parent body's (Charter NI's) other work involved restorative practice. It would be important that Resolve could replace the full-time Practitioner with someone of similar calibre, if he were to leave.

The project operated with a very small budget. A total of £37,000 per annum was committed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for three years, and reviewed annually. This provided 1.5 salaries plus premises costs. No programme costs were available and longer term funding was uncertain. The ICRC told Inspectors that Resolve's financial affairs were channelled through the Charter NI office and were completely satisfactory.

The project's main stated activities involved supporting people who were under paramilitary threat, mediating in neighbourhood disputes and at interfaces, and tackling anti-social behaviour. It was difficult to quantify as their engagement frequently did not have a clearly-defined start or conclusion, but service users provided highly complimentary feedback in terms of the quality. They reported prompt and effective resolutions that would not have been achieved with statutory agencies or other community groups, considerable financial savings and alleviation of social distress.



A wide range of people testified positively about Resolve. Resolve complied fully with its obligations under human rights legislation, including the rights of the child and the United Nations Principles on Restorative Justice were being observed. They were providing the police with all the details they required and reacting correctly if offences came to light. This work was valued by local police and community leaders, especially as it was attempting to promote the rule of law within a volatile political constituency.

The oral feedback we received was much more informative than material contained in the files. While these followed a standard layout and confidential information was securely stored, there was considerable scope for improving Resolve's recording practice. However the recording deficiencies did not raise any concern about the integrity of the scheme. There were proper arrangements in place for independent handling of complaints, though these had not been tested.

As with many of its counterparts, Resolve was defined more by its community work ethos than by a purely restorative justice model. This was quite appropriate in light of the work it was asked to undertake by local agencies and residents. The degree of sophistication was commensurate with a scheme that had only commenced recently and operated on a very low budget.

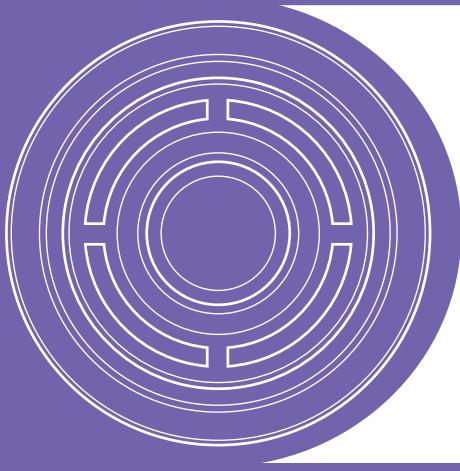
Resolve was a responsible organisation and nobody felt intimidated by its presence or style of activity. The individuals and organisations who worked with them confirmed the Resolve staff and volunteers bona fides. It was able to satisfy a demanding funder and demonstrate financial probity.

In summary, Resolve was making a useful contribution in a fragmented community, delivering value for a very small amount of money. It was operating lawfully and non-coercively, and a particular strength was the relationship with local statutory agencies, including the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). While Inspectors identified areas where operational practice should be consolidated, these were not critical and it is deemed suitable to proceed to the next stage of the DoJ accreditation process.

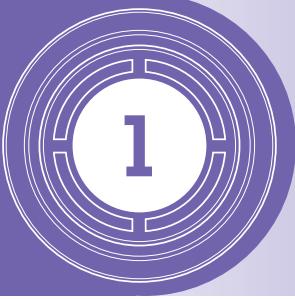
## Recommendations

As part of this inspection, Inspectors have made a number of operational recommendations for improvement which are commensurate with Resolve's early stage of development. They do not represent fundamental failings.

These recommendations are designed to help the project demonstrate its uniqueness and added value in a competitive funding arena. In implementing accepted recommendations, care should be taken not to introduce excessive bureaucracy to a small project which has very limited resources.



# Inspection Report



# 1

# Background

## Context

- 1.0 Community-based restorative justice schemes in Northern Ireland were originally funded to reduce the incidence of punishment beatings by providing an alternative, legitimate means of imposing sanctions on those who committed offences against the community. The initial funding came from charitable trusts, and government funding followed from 2007 after several schemes in Republican and Loyalist areas were accredited. The schemes evolved considerably since inception and their focus came to be more on community work with a restorative ethos, than on formal restorative justice conferencing.
- 1.1 East Belfast was a politically complex district in which various Loyalist groups were active. Resolve's parent group, Charter NI, worked with a UDA constituency, and Charter NI's 'Prison 2 Peace' initiative had been specifically funded to work with ex-UDA prisoners until 2014.
- 1.2 Resolve's full-time Practitioner explained that while there was a small minority of detractors, the vast majority of local people were supportive of his role. The detractors did not pose any difficulties and he was able to engage effectively with everyone.
- 1.3 The full-time Practitioner also indicated that Resolve's existence "*gives confidence to politicians and others who aspire to positive change.*" He and others suggested it was important in trying to engage a volatile constituency that would otherwise not have had a voice.
- 1.4 Such engagement was sensitive and negative publicity concerning the Charter Chief Executive Officer and a Board member in spring 2016 had caused nervousness for senior stakeholders about the implications for Resolve: they were concerned about reputational damage caused by the association. While this issue may require consideration at the next stage of the accreditation process, it does not directly impinge upon CJL's view of Resolve's operation and integrity at local level.
- 1.5 Resolve emerged from 'Prison 2 Peace' following an approach by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which wished to proactively offer a small amount of funding. Resolve was the only Charter NI programme to promote itself as a restorative justice project. At the time of this inspection it was embryonic, having commenced operation in October 2014 with a full-time Practitioner. He was joined in December 2014 by the second Practitioner who was

employed on a part-time basis. Resolve was located in the inner city, on the lower Castlereagh Road in East Belfast, though also helped in other areas if requests for assistance were received.

- 1.6 It secured the ICRC funding and following a preliminary meeting with CJI in early 2015, moved quickly to develop proper structures and governance arrangements.
- 1.7 From Resolve's perspective, the main attractions of seeking accreditation were to strengthen the prospect of longer term funding and to receive referrals under the Protocol. Some interviewees suggested that a Charter NI project should be funded on the same basis as other restorative justice providers whose origins lay elsewhere.
- 1.8 For their part, statutory agencies such as the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) said they would be more comfortable in making referrals to an organisation that was accredited.

## Governance

- 1.9 The corporate architecture was unusual, though in line with Charter NI's normal management arrangements for a new project and accepted as appropriate by the project funder. Charter NI employed the Resolve staff, provided its constitution and managed its finances. Charter NI was also represented on Resolve's management committee by the deputy chair of the Board of Directors. However Resolve's operational practice was guided by its own management committee.
- 1.10 While this architecture differed from that of existing restorative justice organisations, it was deemed necessary to provide administrative support and financial management from Charter NI in the absence of funding to fulfil these functions. The corporate governance structures of Resolve would require review to accommodate accreditation principles in the short to medium term.
- 1.11 The management committee met for the first time in March 2015. The members were recruited by Charter NI in conjunction with the full-time Practitioner and included representatives from the PSNI, the NIHE, Restorative Justice Council Northern Ireland, Charter NI, as well as non-Government organisations and the Belfast Regeneration Office. The committee was representative in terms of gender, religion and political opinion, and provided a significant level of skills and experience to support Resolve's development.
- 1.12 The management committee had a clear philosophy that derived from their knowledge of the local area. Their priorities were to promote community cohesion and concentrate on interventions with a hard-to-reach constituency. They were not precious about delivering a pure restorative justice model and viewed negotiation and intervention roles as equally valid in East Belfast. They were also clear that Resolve should not become yet another generic youth work provider or community scheme.

- 1.13 While not directly relevant to this inspection, Inspectors would suggest that any proposed expansion of Charter NI's restorative justice role would require the establishment of a management committee of a similar calibre to the committee that Resolve has convened.
- 1.14 Management committee meetings were held monthly. Minutes from March 2015 to January 2016 reflected an average attendance of seven members plus the two paid officials. The professional backgrounds of committee members were evident and they applied a business-like approach. There was a standard agenda that addressed activity and performance, finance and liaison with various local agencies. Monthly statistical reports contained relevant information including new referrals, closed cases, referral source by age and gender.
- 1.15 Resolve published a set of Values and Objectives for 2016-17. These were appropriate for its stage of development and emphasised engagement with the local community, safety, respect for diversity and good communication. There were six objectives which aimed to help reduce violence, strengthen community cohesion and achieve accreditation.
- 1.16 Resolve adopted a range of policies which included a Statement of Purpose, Aims, Values, Volunteer Policy, Complaints Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Data Protection, Confidentiality, Equal Opportunities, Complaints and Whistle blowing. It had a Staff Handbook and had developed its own risk assessment process and a Risk Register.

### **Operational recommendations 1-3**

**Resolve should publish an annual report which demonstrates achievements against objectives;**

**Resolve should appoint an independent external assessor for its Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy; and**

**Resolve should adopt a scoring mechanism to quantify and prioritise the business risks in its Risk Register.**

### **Funding**

- 1.17 Resolve received £37,000 per annum from the ICRC. This was its sole source of income. It provided 1.5 salaries, accommodation costs and a small management fee for Charter NI which processed all monies and accounts for the project. No programme costs were provided, which was limiting: for example, the Practitioners were restricted in their ability to travel on business, yet the PSNI explained that Resolve assisted them with matters of mutual interest in Co. Antrim and in North Down.

- 1.18 The ICRC was clear that its funding offer was not open to all. Instead they proactively approached groups in whom they wished to invest, in order to address issues that were of concern to them. The ICRC funding was due to expire in June 2016, though there was a possibility of extension for a further 12 months.
- 1.19 The ICRC funding stipulations required female involvement, a mediation emphasis, a cross-community dimension, a service that was freestanding from Charter NI and a relationship with Northern Ireland Alternatives (NIA) which also delivered restorative services in East Belfast. They reported that Resolve consistently met all their requirements to a high standard, and provided detailed and timely reports.

## Premises

- 1.20 Resolve's premises were prominently located at a major intersection in inner East Belfast. They comprised a small, two storey office that was leased from a local businessman who supported the project's aims. External security was provided by a roller shutter, the building was alarmed and had CCTV cover. Both of the Practitioners were key holders.

## Staff

- 1.21 The staff team comprised two Restorative Practitioners. One was employed on a full-time basis and the other for 20 hours per week. The full-time Practitioner held managerial responsibility and the part-time Practitioner was primarily responsible for administration processes.

## Operational recommendation 4

**Resolve should differentiate the job titles and job descriptions of the two Restorative Practitioners, to illustrate full-time, part-time, managerial and administrative responsibilities.**

- 1.22 The full-time Practitioner was a former prisoner who had been active in local community work for several years. His most recent post was with Charter NI's 'Prison 2 Peace' programme. Everyone we interviewed, including police and other statutory agencies, was entirely positive about his commitment and bona fides. He was highly-respected and was clearly committed to a cross-community approach. He made himself widely available, at all times of day and night, throughout the year.
- 1.23 In addition to his Resolve role, the full-time Practitioner also had other roles that complemented his involvement with Resolve. He was:
  - Chair of the Inner Castlereagh Partnership;
  - involved in outreach work with schools and community groups, along with former Republican prisoners;

- involved in 'Peace Wall conversations' aimed at galvanising local communities in relation to crime prevention, better uptake of health services and education; and
- a trained Local Area Contact for Belfast Conflict Resolution Centre.

- 1.24 The part-time Practitioner was also dedicated to Resolve. She was a recent graduate and the value of her contribution was confirmed by interviewees. It was readily apparent that she and the full-time Practitioner complemented each other effectively. The management committee reported that both Practitioners were open to advice about developing the project in matters such as funding applications, feedback from service users, statistical information and case closures.
- 1.25 Both Practitioners reported that they enjoyed good support from Charter NI's management committee members and volunteers. This was important as the risk of burn-out could be high in work of this nature.
- 1.26 There was also a small pool of active accredited volunteers, of whom four were trained in restorative justice methods. They were drawn from the local community and said they valued the supportive structure and ethos that Resolve provided.
- 1.27 While goodwill was plentiful, Resolve faced a challenge in terms of succession planning. Although Charter NI provided the benefits of a corporate 'parent' allowing Resolve to develop its own identity and assisting with corporate functions, none of its other projects had a restorative justice ethos. A total of 14 others with the same background and beliefs as the full-time practitioner had undertaken the Ulster University Certificate in Restorative Practices. However, due to funding restrictions they had to secure employment elsewhere. It would be important that Resolve could replace the full-time Practitioner with someone of similar calibre, if he were to leave.

## Operational recommendation 5

**Resolve's Management Committee should ensure that succession planning is in place to avoid over-reliance on one person.**

- 1.28 Both Practitioners had completed the Ulster University Certificate and both were currently studying at postgraduate level. Their tutor was impressed with their levels of vocation and commitment and their determination to professionalise the Resolve service.

## Operational recommendation 6

**Resolve should develop a Business Plan to outline future development proposals. This should identify how to strengthen the administrative capacity, increase income and expand the volunteer base.**



# Delivery and outcomes

## Caseload Statistics

- 2.1 This type of work did not lend readily to accurate quantitative measurement, though Resolve had begun to refine its data capture methods. By February 2016 there had been 90 cases involving 73 people/incidents. Only four of these were current at the time of inspection and the remainder had been closed.
- 2.2 The database showed that during April to December 2015:
  - 55 referrals were made. Of these, 32 were self-referrals, 14 came from the community and nine from statutory or voluntary organisations;
  - the main reasons for referral were 'Paramilitary threat' (28 cases) and 'Community threat' (11 cases); and
  - a significant minority of the 'Outcomes' involved formal restorative conferences.
- 2.3 These data mask the significant amounts of time that were spent on cases, their sensitivity and complexity, and the fact that many were dealt with outside normal working hours, often at weekends and night time. Nonetheless, the Resolve Practitioners were never found wanting in terms of a prompt, hands-on response. Several contributors reported that the response was quicker and more practical than their own agencies could have provided.

## Filing System and Recording

- 2.4 Case files were held in locked cabinets that were stored upstairs in a secure building with an alarm and roller shutter.
- 2.5 The case filing system followed a standardised format. It comprised an index folder which was held in a separate cabinet from the full files, and was linked to the full files by a reference number. Client names, age group and action taken were recorded. The management committee had encouraged the Practitioners to close cases and move on, rather than keep them open indefinitely, and this process was working well.
- 2.6 The four current case files and 14 closed files were examined. Most of the incidents fell below the criminal threshold and were more about anti-social behaviour, neighbour disputes, paramilitary threats and racism. Although mainly low level matters, they had considerable social impact and some could have escalated to involve personal injury and damage to property.

- 2.7 Inspectors made several observations about Resolve's filing and recording practice:
- there was plentiful evidence of referrals to the PSNI;
  - there was no formal process for obtaining consent, but records suggested it was implicitly sought in most cases, for example, before information was relayed to statutory agencies;
  - there was no evidence of the complaints system being made known to individual service users, though leaflets referred to it;
  - all the files were contained in poly pockets and apart from printed copies of e-mails, consisted mainly of loose leaf, handwritten pages;
  - file entries were usually brief, were sometimes out of sequence and seldom correlated with time sheet entries;
  - case outcomes were seldom clear, making it impossible to decipher what actually took place;
  - it was not always clear why people went to Resolve, as many were not apparently under threat or in dispute. For example, one case involved a request for information from a man who was being prosecuted for electricity fraud;
  - the distinctive benefits provided by Resolve were not always clear, especially when the person had already been elsewhere for example, to the police or housing provider;
  - service users were frequently '*signposted*' to other services and it was not always apparent why they needed to go to Resolve simply in order to be directed elsewhere;
  - referrals that should have been ineligible for example, a request to sort out a major altercation in a pub, were still counted as 'cases';
  - files often showed the actions of other agencies rather than illustrating Resolve's unique contribution; and
  - very few of the referrals we viewed actually involved paramilitary threats from the UDA or other paramilitary organisations. However, Resolve did not turn anyone away and were often able to assist with other matters that emerged after the presenting problem was clarified.

### Operational recommendation 7

**Resolve should develop its filing system and recording practice to address the issues highlighted in paragraph 2.7 of this report.**

- 2.8 The Practitioners were able to verbally articulate many of the outcomes that were not clear from the files. They explained that they deliberately limited the amount of recording, in order to protect confidentiality.
- 2.9 While recording needed to improve, the matters outlined above did not raise concern about Resolve's integrity. However in failing to demonstrate the uniqueness of its contribution they did not do justice to its efforts. Inspectors emphasise that remedying this deficiency does not require increased bureaucracy or more recording. Indeed it could lead to less recording.
- 2.10 Where criminal offences were alleged, Resolve had recorded how victims were referred to the PSNI. Where the case was of a non-criminal nature there was still a record of how it was dealt with and who was involved. In the majority of cases, Resolve was offering moral support and/or mediation.

## Operational recommendation 8

**Resolve should develop and publish a Manual of Practice which explicitly sets out the uniqueness of its role.**

- 2.11 Several cases involved both Practitioners, and the full-time Practitioner managed the remainder alone. Resolve's volunteers were infrequently involved in casework and their roles were mainly office-based.
- 2.12 While the files lacked detail, they confirmed the message we received from interviewees: that Resolve was providing a valuable support service both for local residents and statutory agencies, especially the PSNI. Some vulnerable people received valuable social and mental health support from Resolve.
- 2.13 Inspectors sought evidence to answer the following questions:
  - *Are the schemes triaging cases correctly and passing appropriate cases to the PSNI?*

It was apparent from the case files and from interviews that links with the PSNI were strong at local level. The Practitioners clearly understood the boundaries and there was no hint that they strayed into an investigative role or imposed sanctions on anyone.

- 2.14
  - *Are clients (victims of crime) properly informed at the outset about the role of Resolve and its obligations under the Protocol?*

The Protocol was not relevant as cases involving explicit criminality were not referred to Resolve. The Practitioners were adamant that they informed all service users about the project's limitations at the outset. Interviewees corroborated this indication and there was nothing to suggest any inappropriate conduct.

- 2.15
  - *Are human rights, the rights of the child, and the UN Principles on Restorative Justice observed?*

While the case file examination was not informative in this respect, interviewees confirmed that parents and guardians were involved in any matters relating to children.

- 2.16
  - *Are they providing the police with all the details they require and indicating how they would deal with a case if it were referred back to them?*

In each of the cases referred to the PSNI, Resolve had provided all the information in their possession and the police confirmed that they were entirely supportive of the way in which Resolve had processed the cases. In the absence of accreditation, no cases had been referred back to Resolve by justice agencies.

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

Most cases examined by Inspectors involved a degree of partnership working with at least one statutory agency. The Practitioners were clear about their obligations if they became aware of an apparent crime. Resolve enjoyed the trust of statutory providers, particularly in relation to sharing information.

2.18 • *Are people given the necessary personal support in the restorative justice process?*

Only a few cases involved a formal restorative process. However, the case files indicated that Resolve invested a great deal of time and effort in supporting people who engaged with them. It was clear that the Practitioners cared about their service users and local community.

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

Resolve's management committee included people with appropriate professional experience. They also had a positive relationship with criminal justice academics who had provided training and commented positively on their progress.

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

There was an independent person to whom dissatisfied service users could bring an unresolved complaint. Their availability was promoted on consent forms and information leaflets, though they had not yet been used.

### Protocol cases

- 2.21 It was always intended that the Protocol should be reviewed in light of operational experience, and in reality it had long since become defunct and irrelevant. This applied as much to Resolve as to other restorative justice schemes. In any event, Resolve was not eligible to undertake protocol cases since they were not accredited.
- 2.22 Nonetheless the scheme had extensive engagement with the PSNI. Resolve recognised that, in the event of being accredited and receiving referrals under the Protocol, it would not be their role to carry out any form of criminal investigation.
- 2.23 Inspectors were told that the Protocol was being revised. The timescale for this was unconfirmed, though it was recognised that accredited projects might be eligible to apply for Peace IV funding.
- 2.24 On the wider front the full-time Practitioner was engaged in a range of community support activity such as the local Tension Monitoring Group. This worked closely with Short Strand residents at a highly-contested sectarian interface. The Short Strand representatives spoke very positively about his contribution to calming tensions during marches, football matches and other contentious events.
- 2.25 Case files and interviews indicated that at the time of the inspection, Resolve was engaged in work that was valued in its community. It was operating lawfully and non-coercively, respecting human rights and had a constructive working relationship with the local PSNI.



# Operational relationships with local agencies

- 3.1 Inspectors saw very complimentary written feedback from all the relevant statutory agencies in support of Resolve's funding bids.
- 3.2 The ICRC Grant Aid Agreement explicitly outlined, *inter alia*, that Resolve was required "...to establish a non-violent method of resolving crime, conflict and anti-social behaviour through [a] CBRJ project in Loyalist working class areas associated with the UDA." Several pre-conditions had been met by Resolve in order for the initial ICRC funding to be awarded, and to subsequently be renewed.

## PSNI

- 3.3 A PSNI Neighbourhood Inspector sat on Resolve's management committee. He considered it provided an essential service and had no criticisms or concerns. While unable to refer cases because the scheme was not accredited, he would otherwise have been happy to do so. He valued the Practitioners' appetite to help the local community move away from paramilitarism and act as a positive influence in a fragmented Loyalist community.

## NIHE

- 3.4 The NIHE was also convinced of the Practitioners' integrity. Their representatives were keen that Resolve be accredited as they would be more comfortable about sharing information once accreditation was in place.
- 3.5 The NIHE explained that Resolve had prevented significant amounts of damage to their properties and was very helpful in dealing with race hate attacks. They said the full-time Practitioner understood the wider perspective and offered a voice of reason. He had helped avoid evictions, and was reported as practical and quick to respond.
- 3.6 **A local MLA** was very supportive of Resolve and keen to see it flourish in the interests of better community cohesion. He illustrated with examples of cases on which they had worked jointly and credited the full-time Practitioner with an established track record of trust and respect in the district.
- 3.7 **Belfast City Council** (BCC) was closely involved with Resolve. Council officials appreciated its contribution, particularly the direct assistance that was provided to their anti-social behaviour wardens.

- 3.8 BCC also said Resolve could be relied on to provide an accurate version of events at times when situations were confused. Their contribution to the Tension Monitoring Group and Belfast Conflict Resolution Centre were reported as particularly useful.
- 3.9 **Representatives from the Nationalist community** spoke highly of Resolve's full-time Practitioner. The Short Strand Community Forum and CRJI were unequivocally positive about his commitment to move away from a single identity approach and engage on a cross-community basis.
- 3.10 Service users were unanimous about the social benefits, reductions in stress and significant financial savings that Resolve achieved. They provided examples of damage to premises and personal injuries being avoided; potential conflicts between paramilitary factions being headed-off; and the full-time Practitioner taking considerable personal risks, especially during periods of community tension such as the flag protests.
- 3.11 **Service users** explained that police responses to their various crises would have taken much longer than Resolve. They would have had to deal with different police officers and outcomes would have been poorer if evidence to support a prosecution was not available. Consequently, they suggested that Resolve provided better justice than a formal response.
- 3.12 Some service users were perpetrators of anti-social behaviour in their own right, as well as victims. This could be delicate but Inspectors saw the Resolve Practitioners handled these situations sensitively and in a balanced way.
- 3.13 **Northern Ireland Alternatives** (NIA) was a well-established restorative justice project which was located close to Resolve. Inspectors queried the viability of two similar programmes in such close proximity to each other. They were told the projects served two different political constituencies and interviewees suggested there was a need for both.
- 3.14 Others such as the NIACRO Base 2 Project, said the Resolve Practitioners were trustworthy, displayed good integrity and handled pressure very well.



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