

# convention news



**Name:** Lee Reynolds  
**Role:** Executive Director  
**Responsibilities:** Lee joined the Company in January 2005 and is responsible for the staff and financial management of the Company, its strategic direction and public relations.  
**Background:** Lee became involved in community development work while studying at Queen's University Belfast. After graduation he worked in various community and cultural initiatives in Belfast and across Northern Ireland including South City Resource and Development Centre, Ulster-Scots Heritage Council and South Belfast Partnership Board. In a voluntary capacity he works with community and youth groups in the Glenbryn area.

**Name:** Nichola Matthews  
**Role:** Personal Assistant  
**Responsibilities:** Nichola has been with the Company since it began in January 2005 and has responsibility for the day to day running of the office, administration of the Company's website and financial monitoring.  
**Background:** Nichola is on secondment to the Company from North and West Belfast Health and Social Services where she has worked for the past eight years. Whilst with North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust, Nichola worked in a number of different departments including the Community Addition Team, Health Action Zone and the Futures Project

The Community Convention and Development Company currently has four full-time members of staff.

**Name:** Dawn Shackels  
**Role:** Development Officer  
**Responsibilities:** Dawn joined the Company in September 2005 and has responsibility for the delivery of a full Convention in Mid and South Armagh. Dawn is currently in the process of arranging a number of focus groups, to lead up to a wider convention in Mid and South Armagh in 2006.  
**Background:** Since graduating in European Studies with German in 2001, Dawn worked for Belfast Local Strategy Partnership where she had responsibility for the implementation of an urban regeneration programme in parts of East, South, West Belfast and Shankill.

**Name:** Liam McAncy  
**Role:** Development Officer  
**Responsibilities:** Liam joined the Company in May 2005 and is delivering support to disadvantaged Protestant communities in Dunmurry Cross where a number of meetings have been held between representatives of the local schools, churches and community organisations. A community survey and structured questionnaire are also in progress. Liam is also exploring the potential for holding a full Convention in the Ards Peninsula.  
**Background:** Liam was a Lecturer in Community Development Studies at the Ulster People's College and the University of Ulster for 15 years. He has worked extensively in disadvantaged Protestant communities in Belfast, Lisburn, Portadown and Londonderry and has been instrumental in supporting communities to develop a positive vision for their communities.

To develop, empower and transform disadvantaged Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist communities

Welcome to the first edition of Convention News. The Community Convention and Development Company hope this newsletter will be a useful update on what has been happening within the Company and also to let you know about its future plans.

## What is a Community Convention?

There is no set format for a Community Convention. Every community has a particular set of issues, needs and problems and a unique experience of these. The community's identification of the means by which these can be addressed will also be different; consequently each Convention will be tailored to local circumstances.

The Company and all local representatives will discuss the most suitable format to fulfil the aims of a Convention and the process will be guided by equity, be inclusive of all interests and transparent in its approach.

## What are the aims of a Convention?

### The aims are simple:

- To encourage and reinforce individual and community confidence
- To improve relationships within disadvantaged Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist communities and with government
- To develop a positive vision for disadvantaged Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist communities
- To identify areas for action e.g. capacity
- To lobby for policy change

The values which underpin a Community Convention are inclusiveness and transparency.

### My community is interested, what do I do now?

If you are interested in finding out more or wish to express an interest in holding a Community Convention please contact:

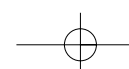
**Nichola Matthews** Community Convention and Development Company Limited

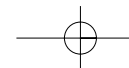
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Funded by the Department for Social Development





"I found the day very helpful, stimulating and useful and look forward to participating in future events organised by CC&DC"



## Future Plans

The Community Convention and Development Company are currently consulting with communities in Mid/South Armagh, North Belfast and Dunmurry regarding possible Community Conventions.

### Mid/South Armagh

The Company is working closely with PUL Networking. A number of focus groups are currently underway including youth, women, men and churches. The focus groups will lead up to a wider Convention in 2006.

### North Belfast

The Company is working with the North Belfast Steering Group. A celebration showcase of good practice is planned for March 2006. It is anticipated that the showcase will be attended by community and voluntary representatives from the North Belfast area. The Steering Group was formed following a residential event organised by North and West Belfast Health Action Zone.

### Dunmurry

Dunmurry is another area where the Company are working. A number of meetings have been held with various groups. Structured interviews and a questionnaire to determine the community's concerns/views/issues have taken place. A number of meetings with representatives of local schools, churches and community groups have been facilitated to begin to develop a common vision for disadvantaged PUL communities in the Dunmurry Cross area.

The crucial issue at present is the threatened closure of Seymour Hill Primary School.

## Protestant, Unionist Loyalist Communities - Leading a Positive Transformation

The Company recently held a conference in the Lagan Valley Island Civic Centre, Lisburn. The Conference's theme was Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist Communities - Leading a Positive Transformation. The Conference was successful in attracting a world-renowned expert on social capital and contributions from a number of senior representatives from key organisations within the Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist (PUL) community. Over 70 attendees were drawn from across the Province and various sectors including the community; voluntary; loyal orders; political representatives statutory; media; academic and churches.

The Minister for Social Development, David Hanson MP, opened the Conference with a short speech. In it he outlined the governments' ongoing work and commitment to address the issues of concern to PUL communities through the Taskforce and support for initiatives such as Community Conventions. Mr Hanson reiterated the government's willingness to listen to the PUL community.

The speakers included Professor Robert Putnam of Harvard University, the leading thinker on social capital and author of the international bestseller Bowling Alone. Professor Putnam outlined how the PUL community is not unique in the challenges it faces in relation to social capital. There have been similar trends in most modern democracies in the past few decades, these problems have occurred before and have been overcome by the reinvention of social capital. Religious groups were particularly successful at establishing bridging capital.

"Please keep this process going it has the potential to grow and make a significant change to life in Northern Ireland"

In the question and answer session, Professor Putnam outlined how bonding and social capital are not independent of one another but that they are interdependent - good bonding capital contributes to good bridging capital. This analysis would go some way in explaining the problems PUL communities face in fully engaging in inter-community work. Factionalism and fractionalism characterises much of the bonding capital in PUL communities and that hampers the development of bridging capital.

Also speaking on the day were Rt Rev Alan Harper, Bishop of Down and Connor, David McNarry, MLA, Ulster Unionist Party and Jeffrey Donaldson, MP, MLA, Democratic Unionist Party. The theme of their input was - Leading a Positive Transformation - Three perspectives. Sammy Douglas and Anne Carr, two of CC&DC Ltd's Directors updated delegates on the work of the Company and Olive Bell, Edgell Hill Theological College/PUL Networking gave an overview of the challenges those trying to effect social change in PUL communities face.

### Workshop topics included

- There is a general desire for greater unity and cohesion among Protestant Unionist Loyalist communities.
  - What issues do you believe those from a Protestant, Unionist or Loyalist background can achieve greater unity and cohesion on?
- What issues do you believe those from a Protestant, Unionist or Loyalist background will find it difficult to achieve greater unity and cohesion on?
- Community activists, politicians, volunteers and religious ministers often take on leadership roles in their organisations and in their communities.
  - How well prepared are they for this role?
  - How can they be better equipped for this role?
- What needs to be done, and by whom, within and without Protestant Unionist Loyalist communities, to deliver a positive transformation?

"The conference was excellent and very well organised"

"Thought the workshops were excellent. It is a great model of hearing everyone's views and options"

The workshops enabled those in attendance to air their views on the above subjects, with participants expressing high level of consensus on the three questions they were asked. The focus groups succeeded in identifying a series of actions for the PUL community, government and others which could lead a positive transformation.

The Company believe this Conference offered a unique opportunity for the full diversity of leaders and organisations from across the full spectrum of the Protestant Unionist Loyalist communities to meet and collectively discuss ways forward at a crucial time.

A report is currently being compiled and will soon be available on the Company's website ([www.comcon.org.uk](http://www.comcon.org.uk)). In the meantime why not log on and view other information from the event including speeches and presentations.

