

SCENE

Supporting
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Empowering



Graduation Day!

The 6th July 2018 was a proud day for 2 of our community volunteers when they graduated from Ulster University with Commendations in the Advanced Diploma in Social Enterprise.

Aaron Thompson and David McPhillips, Office Bearers of Killynure Community Association, first enrolled on the Advanced Diploma course in 2016 after completing the full suite of Supporting Communities' qualifications. Two years later, they have successfully graduated and are looking forward to implementing what they have learnt in their community.

Aaron and David were also jointly awarded the Podiem Award for Excellence by Bill Manson, Director, Podiem Ltd.

Speaking at the event, Bill Manson said, "This year's cohort of students were excellent, but two people stood out and have been an inspiration to both learners and lecturers. This award is usually presented to one person, but we are delighted to present it jointly to Aaron and David."

Speaking to SCENE, Aaron and David said, "We are definitely relieved to be finished the course but very pleased and proud that we have both completed a qualification at Ulster University. We would like to thank Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and the Flax Trust for providing us with bursaries to complete the course without which we could never have hoped to attend university. We would also like to thank Stephen from Supporting Communities for his mentoring and guidance throughout the course – it was invaluable and he



Aaron and David celebrate their graduation with Stephen Marks., Supporting Communities

definitely helped to keep us calm! Everything we worked on in the course we will be able to put to practical use and realise our ambitions to transform our community."

Stephen Marks, Training and Social Enterprise Officer for Supporting Communities remarked, "I am delighted for David and Aaron, they have both worked tremendously hard on each module and definitely put a lot of effort in. Now that they have completed their personal development journey for the time being, I look forward to seeing them implement their new Strategic Plan for their area. The real hard work starts now and Supporting

Communities is happy to be able to help Killynure Community Association in the next stage of their journey."

Congratulations also to Lisanelly Regeneration Group's Siobhan McDermot and Ashley Moore for completing this course as well as Supporting Communities Senior Training Officer, Aidan Kearney.

"Everything we worked on in the course we will be able to put to practical use and realise our ambitions to transform our community."
- Aaron & David



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Bernie Burns Retires

By Sheenagh McNally & Orla McCann

In April Bernie Burns was recognised for her lifetime of service to her community and commitment to the development of the Brownlow area. Many of us at Supporting Communities have had the privilege of working alongside Bernie at Drumellan Family Learning Complex where she has been a dedicated community worker for many years.

This incredible woman, is a true 'force of nature', with a reputation for getting things done and will be missed by all who had the pleasure of working with her.



Bernie being presented with a certificate of appreciation to mark her retirement from the Housing Executive (Pictured l-r Denise McNally (Housing Services Manager), Colm McDaid (Chief Executive, Supporting Communities), Comghal McQuillan (South Regional Manager), Bernie Burns and John McCartan (South Area Manager)

Bernie has always had a tremendous amount of community spirit keeping people at the heart of everything she does. She worked tirelessly to improve the living conditions for all residents in her area and has become a respected voice in her community. One of the most humble people you could meet, Bernie has a fierce determination and a highly charged sense of social justice driving her. Her long service to the Drumellan area is clearly evident in the success of the estate today.

Her journey into community development began shortly after she and her late husband moved to Edenbeg (now Drumellan) in the late 1970s when it was clear to see



Wishing Bernie a long & happy #Retirement from the Board & Staff @SuppCommunities. Thank you for looking after all our staff who have been based in Drumellan Family Learning Complex over the past 15 years. #CommunityChampion #MakingADifference #Impact

that spiralling heating costs were having a detrimental effect on the community. Bernie got involved in a residents group to address the problems with the district heating system. It was a steep learning curve for all concerned in an era when the tenants' voice was not really considered. Despite many knockbacks, the community successfully negotiated a change in the heating system that was to make a huge difference.

Bernie went on to become a stalwart member of the community group and even when things were extremely difficult in the 1990s, Bernie's determination to improve the living conditions and environment never waned. Edenbeg was subjected to a prolonged period of serious antisocial behaviour, frequent arson attacks that led to mass dereliction with row after row of boarded-up properties.

Bernie and her committee commanded respect from the statutory bodies with whom she worked to jointly develop an Estate Based Strategy. As a result, about 160 burnt out homes were demolished, improvement schemes were introduced and the estate was renamed beginning the complete turnaround for the area.

Bernie and her committee's contributions to the Estate Based Strategy highlighted the need not only to improve the physical environment but equally the need to provide much needed services for the community. In other words, more than just bricks and mortar!

Today, Drumellan is a lovely, stable estate with few turnovers and a healthy waiting list.

One Year of Empowering Communities

The 25th April, 2018 marked the first year anniversary of Empowering Communities, and what a year it has been!

Since the launch of the new trading subsidiary last year at the Skainos Centre in Belfast, Empowering Communities has been busy providing support, advice, and training to our new members and other stakeholders.



Celebrating the launch of Empowering Communities in April 2017

In just one year Empowering Communities has:

- > Supported 5 Housing Associations in the development and review of their Tenant Participation Strategies
- > Delivered bespoke Tenant Participation training to 55 staff members from a range of Housing Associations
- > Designed and delivered bespoke Good Governance and Effective Meetings training for 4 Housing Associations to 172 tenants and staff members
- > Delivered Tenant Participation and Community Development OCN Accredited (Level 2) training to 41 Housing Association members of staff
- > Provided Tenant Inspector training to 22 tenants who were keen to undertake service improvement exercises for Choice Housing
- > Supported South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust to independently establish a Tenants Committee within a supported living scheme
- > Organised a good practice visit to Glasgow for Housing Association and Housing Executive staff
- > Established a Support Network for Housing Association Officers who have

a key role in engaging with Tenants. The Tenant Participation Practitioner's Network, as it is known, provides an opportunity to receive support and share good practice

- > Held 'How to Do It' sessions looking at specific areas such as; Mystery Shopping, Tenant Participation Strategies, Induction for New Tenant Members, etc.

Although this has been an incredibly busy year, we do not intend to rest on our laurels.

Empowering Communities has recently produced an operational plan for the coming year and is planning to introduce some new and exciting services for members including:

- > Member Accreditation Scheme
- > Additional Staff and tenant training courses



Joanne Coyle, South Ulster Housing with Sheenagh McNally

For more information on Empowering Communities or to find out how you can become a member, please contact: Siobhan O'Neill on 028 3834 2792 or by email at siobhan@supportingcommunities.org



Empowering Communities Study Trip to Glasgow in 2017

Succession Planning: A Community Development Approach

Community groups rely on volunteers with huge reserves of passion and commitment and this makes them particularly vulnerable to the sudden departure of key people. Every organisation should think about this in advance and have plans and procedures in place.

For community groups, the importance of encouraging younger people to be involved is critical to the sustainability of their group. Succession planning is about looking at where your group is now, where it needs to go and what you can do to get there. It is about putting a system in place to ensure that when someone leaves you are not left with a deficit of knowledge and expertise and that there is someone in the wings ready to step into that role.

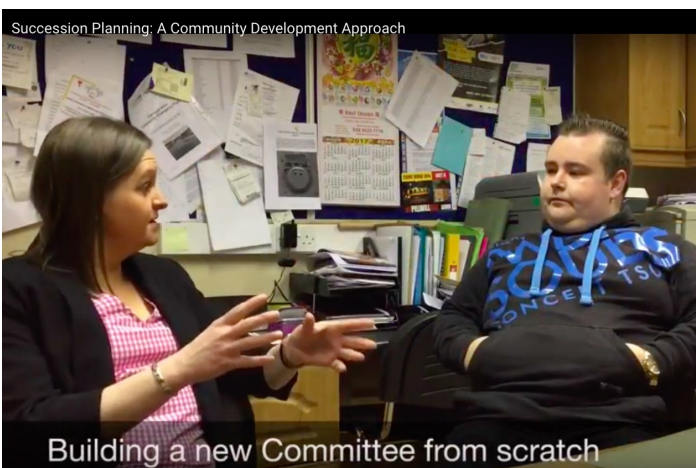
Supporting Communities visited 4 community groups that are taking active steps to ensure they are involving new and younger people in their groups, training those who are interested and reaching out to skilled members of the community to strengthen and protect the longevity of their management committees. We asked each group how they approached succession planning, heard about the challenges they faced, the methods they used, and the benefits they found in ensuring younger people are part of the process.

Roe Valley Residents Association, a thriving community organisation in Limavady who recognise the value of skilling up local people. Talking to several members of the staff and the management committee, they shared how they value the opportunities that being part of the group provided them to learn new skills and to use those skills to give back and improve the organisation, enabling it to provide valuable services to the area. The supportive and welcoming nature of this group as well as the amazing range of activities on offer would make anyone want to get involved!

Enagh Youth Forum in L'Derry has a truly youth led group. EYF is all about building up young leaders in the community. We were really impressed with the young people, aged 18-25, who are part of the management committee. As a youth-based group, members are constantly leaving the group making succession planning an everyday consideration. They explained how they actively recruit, train and prepare the younger members to join the management committee when they turn 18.

Moneydig Rural Network, we heard how a small group of people in a very rural area recognised the need for a community building to combat isolation. What started as a group of mums looking for things to do with their children has expanded into an area wide network of people providing activities and services to all ages. The management committee works very much as a team, drawing on the specialist skills of various members. They told us they actually have no trouble attracting committee members and they were amazed at the numbers that turned out at their first public meeting. We also met some of the next generation, who are already getting involved and running their own events – Moneydig looks to be in very good hands!

Carnagat Community Association in Newry, a group that really appreciates the importance of succession planning as they had to restart their committee from scratch. They now actively rotate the management roles and have a 'vice' role for every position so that everyone has a chance to learn and develop the skills needed. They value the contribution of their committee members and



Still shot from our Succession Planning video.

Watch it on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvxFy-rrUN4&feature=youtu.be>

are sure to show their appreciation through trips and fun activities as well as the more serious training opportunities.

The benefits of succession planning are clear. It provides continuity for your group through member turnover and a clear plan for member progression and replacement. It also provides recognition and reward for long serving members as they mentor new members and share their knowledge. Most importantly, it encourages groups to identify critical

roles and skills and seek out or train up members to meet those needs.

Ultimately, succession planning should help you achieve your group's objectives over the next 5, 10 or more years by ensuring you have the right people with the right skills at the right time.

If your group would like more information or advice on Succession Planning, contact info@supportingcommunities.org.

CO3 'Leading People' Award

In May, our Chief Executive, Colm McDaid, was awarded the Leading People award from CO3. We asked what winning meant to him and what he thinks makes a good leader:

"The CO3 Leadership Award meant a great deal to me for several reasons. Firstly, I really appreciated that Supporting Communities' Chair and Board members felt that I deserved a nomination in the first instance and took the time to apply. It's always nice to be recognised for your role but especially so from one's own Board members.

Secondly, the award category itself - 'Leading People' - made the winning even more special given that, as a leader, I place great emphasis on learning and development among our staff. I try to empower staff to think for themselves and to deliver a quality service to customers and clients alike. I also like to support our staff in their own career development.

I don't mean to sound clichéd when I say that I really do feel very privileged and honoured to be the leader of Supporting Communities working with wonderful colleagues who empower communities and change lives in everything that we do as an organisation on a day and daily basis. We hear a lot about 'making a difference' and having an 'impact' – I am delighted to say that we really do and that's very rewarding for me, the Board and all the staff.

What makes a good leader? There are many people who have written books on this subject, all more intelligent than me, however, from a personal perspective I feel a good leader needs 3 key things: vision, energy and resilience. I'll maybe write my own book in 10 years' time!"

Commenting on Colm's leadership, Supporting Communities Chair, Lorraine Campbell said "Colm has transformed Supporting Communities to an organisation which people and communities become self-sufficient and make a real difference. His passion for community development and tenant engagement is naturally apparent to everyone who meets him."



Jill Mills, Senior HR Consultant, Personnel & Training Services presents Colm McDaid, Chief Executive, Supporting Communities with the CO3 Leading People Award

Certificate Ceremony Celebrates Achievement in Lisburn

Over the past year, Supporting Communities has been working in partnership with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) to deliver a range of training to volunteers, staff, and management committee members from different community groups from across the Council area.

On 25th June 2018, in partnership with the Council, we held a celebration event for the graduates of our OCN NI accredited courses at the Bridge Community Centre in Lisburn.

A fantastic total of 99 people were recognised in completing courses in Understanding Social Enterprise Level 2, Developing Social Enterprise Level 3 and/or Community Capacity Building Levels 1, 2 & 3.

Rhonda O'Neill, LCCC Community Support Officer, opened the event by acknowledging the hard work and commitment it took from each participant to complete their respective courses.



Colm celebrates with a ceremony selfie for Twitter.

individuals but in community groups and the wider local area. As the famed journalist, Sydney J Harris said, "The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows."

Each participant received their certificate from Colm McDaid, Chief Executive Supporting Communities, Councillor Uel Mackin, the Mayor of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Linda Watson, Vice Chair Supporting Communities Board.

Yvonne Swift (left), who completed Community Capacity Building Levels 1-3, said "I have really enjoyed learning so many different topics as it has helped me with my volunteering work. I am a lead volunteer and I help support adults who have learning disabilities, mental health difficulties and autism to name a few. Lisburn Downtown Centre provides several weekly support groups for adults of all ages and abilities, so these courses have been a great way of getting more involved by understanding how the charity is run. Through these courses I have also got to meet so many other people from different community groups in the area. It's been a great way of finding out what they do and it's also given me a chance to promote the work that we do too."



Yvonne Swift, Lead Volunteer at Lisburn Downtown Centre who completed Community Capacity Building Levels 1 – 3

Stephen Marks, Training and Social Enterprise Officer at Supporting Communities echoed her sentiments in praising the dedication from each participant in seeing through the work needed to gain their accreditations. Stephen shared about the impact that attending courses can, have not just on the



Yvonne continued, “The tutors at Supporting Communities have been great! They have helped me learn and understand topics that I had no experience of before.

The training was very good and very clear. I also have a learning difficulty and the tutors have been a great support. They have understood my needs and let me do my work at my own pace which is

*“I’m so proud of myself for completing all 3 courses and how I’ve progressed.”
- Yvonne Swift*

fantastic. Each week I was able to relax and gain more confidence. The tutors have even mentioned how much my confidence has grown from the start! I’m so proud of myself for completing all 3 courses and how I’ve progressed.”

Linda Watson closed the evening by explaining her role at both Supporting Communities as Vice

Chair of Supporting Communities Board and Project Coordinator at Caw Nelson Drive Community Group in L’Derry. She talked about how the training courses at Supporting Communities have helped her and her community group develop skills and confidence over the years to get where they are now.

Many congratulations to all of our graduates in Lisburn and beyond!

Training Courses with Supporting Communities

Supporting Communities offers a wide range of study subjects and training courses that can be tailored to meet your needs. Training is delivered at the location of your choice and we can cater for up to 25 people per course depending on the subject selected. Check out our website for a list of available courses.

Supporting Communities can also provide tailored and bespoke training to meet the needs of your group or organisation. To discuss how our programmes can be tailored for you, get in touch with our Training Team via aidan@supportingcommunities.org.



Digital 4 Community Project Enters Phase Two

The 'D4C' project is now in Phase 2 of its roll out having added five new areas to the scope of its work. This Housing Executive and Supporting Communities joint programme helps tenants to access broadband, computer equipment, gain the skills they need to use the internet and better understand how to get information and services online including, Universal Credit, online shopping, social media, banking and other consumer services.

In Monkstown Community Centre, we held sessions giving an overview of the new benefits system (Universal Credit). Those in attendance had set up personal email addresses, a vital component for applying online for Universal Credit. Others who were interested in accessing online services such as banking and shopping got to grips with navigating and logging into favourite shopping websites and banking apps. We helped one woman go from not knowing how to turn her tablet on, to confidently emailing and attaching photos within a few hours!



Omagh Men's Shed, another new group for D4C, had a fairly specific aim when it came to digital skills. They all had different levels of understanding, so a lot of the basics were covered, but they particularly wanted to get a grasp on social media in order to sell their upcycled furniture and goods on Facebook Marketplace. Due to a low level of foot traffic passing their 'shed', the men wanted to go online to reach a larger audience. In a short period of time, bikes, chairs and tables were all being sold online after advertising to over 42,000 members in a 'buy and sell' group and business continues to boom.



Queen's Quarter Homeless Hostel also are receiving assistance and training as part of the D4C project. Their service users come enthusiastically every week to make use of the tablets and the sessions have become quite a social occasion as well. The staff and participants tell us the convenience of having the tablets and high-quality internet on site will provide a much needed hub for accessing online services. Email accounts and Universal Credit applications have been discussed, as well as YouTube and Facebook!



The Whiteabbey Community Centre has also started their D4C sessions, and as with other areas, the introduction of Universal Credit and the importance of accessing online services is of paramount concern.



The group are keen to learn and are all at different levels, which allows for a lot of peer support. This is a friendly group who are keen to help each other out. Some of the group had little or no knowledge of digital services and how to access them but do have smartphones and tablets so have promised to practice sending emails to each other in between sessions!

The fifth new area for D4C will be in Ardoyne where sessions will be starting soon. We look forward to working with the new group!

Carnduff Group Transforms Community Space

The Carnduff Community Association has given their seaside community a new look with help from a Big Lottery grant. Their new community garden and stone entrance feature launched this July have given the area an identity to be proud of.

Despite only having been formed a few years ago, this small community group are doing things simply and doing them well. They have involved all the residents in the area to take part in the construction of the new garden, including local businesses such as Ballycastle Gardening Services, who donated the plants. The design of the entrance was also the result of a community wide consultation.

“The project has been great bringing everyone together. Carnduff is a great area to live in. These small changes have had a positive impact on those who live here and for those visiting,” said Derek McKendry, Chairman of the Carnduff Community Association.

The Housing Executive also attended the launch event. Leona Laverty, Area Patch Manager remarked, “It has made such a difference to the area, thanks to the Big Lottery Fund for awarding the money to make this all possible.”



Derek and Patricia McKendry of Carnduff Community Association with Gillian Irvine, Big Lottery Fund and Sharleen Wray, Supporting Communities

“It’s a credit to the group, from start to finish the whole project was so focused. They are a pleasure to work with!”
- Sharleen Wray,
Supporting Communities



Launch day attended by Residents, Community Group Representatives, NI Housing Executive, Supporting Communities, Big Lottery Fund Officer, Causeway Coast & Glens Council and Ballycastle Gardening Services.

Diamond Project Renews Albertbridge Road

The Diamond Project was born out of the frustration felt by local people and their feeling that the area had been forgotten. A lack of investment in the streetscape and a number of derelict properties was evidence of the neglect felt by residents of the Albertbridge Road area who also lacked control to make the changes they wanted to see.

The Diamond Project, launched in April 2014, aims to enable, equip and empower people to create a strong, confident and engaged community within the Lord Street and Avoneil area.

A key focus of the work has been developing the partnership between statutory representatives and the community. The project owes much of its success thus far to the recognition that the views of the community, local residents, statutory partners and local politicians must all be taken into account.

Gareth Beacom, the Charter NI Diamond Project Coordinator explained, "There has been a willingness to engage proactively on all sides, to reach consensus and most importantly to deliver actions and not just plans.

While operational for a relatively short time, the project has delivered a number of visible successes, highlighting what can be achieved with a joined up, partnership approach."



Neighbourhood children gather at the new Diamond Project Community Hub building

He went on to say, "Some of our accomplishments, while perhaps seeming small on the outside, such as changing paving stones and slabs, have addressed things that had been a source of frustration for many years. Small steps like this have given us confidence that things can change if there is willingness and commitment to do so."

"Small steps have given us confidence that things can change if there is willingness and commitment to do so."

***- Gareth Beacom,
Project Coordinator***



A new mural on Lord Street with a diamond theme replaces paramilitary imagery.

Key to the success of the project has been the re-imaging of the area in general but particularly the replacement of paramilitary murals in the area with others reflecting the communities' broader interests and concerns. This initiative, funded by the Housing Executive, gave the community confidence that processes could lead to change. The high point of the regeneration programme to date is the transformation of the streetscape through significant investment from the Department of Infrastructure.

While Charter NI continues to provide advice and support to the Project, the energy and the drive is now firmly in the hands of local residents.

Conference Recap: The Future of Housing, Challenges and Opportunities

Supporting Communities was pleased to assist the Class of 2018 in organising the Future of Housing conference held on May 25th in Belfast. The event featured a host of top speakers addressing students and fellow housing professionals on the challenges the sector faces in these changing times.

Prof. Paddy Gray and graduating student Ryan Young opened the event by reflecting on the Ulster University course in Housing Management that has been the start of many great housing careers, including those of several of the speakers and attendees on the day.

This conference marked the end of '30 Years of Housing' at the University, as the course has now been discontinued, making this a bittersweet celebration for many.



The Keynote address was delivered by John-Mark McCafferty, CEO of Threshold, who graciously stepped in for Aideen Hayden at short notice. John-Mark spoke about the work of Threshold, the National

Housing Charity based in Dublin and the housing crisis they are facing in Ireland.

This was followed by, Michael McDonnell, CEO of Choice Housing Ireland, who spoke about the importance of partnership working in changing and uncertain times, the lesson is to find good partners to help you achieve your goals.

Eileen Patterson, Director of Communities at Radius Housing, gave a rousing speech on Challenges and Opportunities, talking candidly about the merger which has formed Radius, Northern Ireland's youngest and largest housing association.

Radius has been a great supporter of the Housing degree with 34 past students now on their



Laura O'Dowd, Paddy Gray & Healy King at the Future of Housing Conference

permanent staff. Clark Bailie, CEO of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, spoke about his professional journey and offered some wisdom to the students in the room as they embark on their own careers.



"Good housing equals good health and wellbeing," he told the large audience present.

***"Good housing equals good health and wellbeing."
- Clark Bailie***

Paul Armstrong and Paula Quigley, both former students from the Class of 2009, presented on the subject of 'More than a Home'.

As the outgoing Deputy CEO of NIFHA, and the CEO of Groundwork respectively, neither worked as housing providers, but

both see their contributions as essential to the creation of communities and good places to live. Indeed, Paula said she 'chose housing' as a profession from the start.



After a break and time to look at the exhibitors' stands and the student projects, the conference reconvened with 'The Perspective from the South', a look at the trends in population and housing from David Silke, the Director of Research and Corporate Affairs at the Housing Agency. Homelessness and the high cost of rent in urban areas are clear priorities.

Lastly, Nicola McCrudden presented the initial findings from the Chartered Institute of Housing's research on 'Rethinking Social Housing' which looked at the role of social housing and its unique circumstances in Northern Ireland.

Supporting Communities Staff Changes

Supporting Communities is delighted to welcome new staff members and other staff members who have transitioned into new roles.



Sheenagh McNally, previously our Housing Association Development Officer, has now been appointed as our Head of Corporate Services.

Sheenagh has been with Supporting Communities for 25 years and most recently has been instrumental in developing and growing our trading subsidiary Empowering Communities.

Siobhan O'Neill, previously the Community Development Officer covering the South Area, will take up the position of Tenant Participation and Community Development Officer working with Housing Associations through Empowering Communities from September 2018.



Kerry Logan joins us as Community Development Officer for Lisburn and Castlereagh, North Down and Ards. Before coming to Supporting Communities, Kerry worked as an Intern at the Corrymeela Community, a peace and reconciliation organisation based in Ballycastle.

Eleanor McGuckin is the newest member of the Training team, working with Sarah Harkness-Robinson on the Tower Block Project, providing training and support to the new groups forming and to address the specific concerns of residents in high-rise accommodation.



Anita Doonan, who has been serving as our Digital Inclusion Officer while Stephanie McKillop was on maternity leave, has been appointed our new Funding and Social Value Officer.

The new Social Value section of this role involves Anita researching models to support groups measure their social value within their communities. She will also be continuing the Funding Officer's role, supporting groups to find appropriate funding streams for their activities.

Catherine Douglas joins us as a Graduate Trainee for the next few months. She has been seconded from the Housing Executive to work with Supporting Communities on a number of projects.



Ryan Young takes on the role of Community Development Officer covering the West Area. He stated, "It's a pleasure to be part of a forward thinking and community centered organisation like Supporting Communities and I am looking forward to all the projects and challenges ahead".

Ryan's background is in Social Housing and worked over 2 years in the Housing Executive before progressing onto a Housing Management degree at the University of Ulster.

During his degree he was placed as a Housing Officer in the Glasgow Housing Association.