

COMMUNITIES INTEGRATING THROUGH YOUTH.

The Journey of a Young Person

R-CITY Programme Model





“ **R-CITY** has evolved today from an idea to develop skills and opportunities for young people into a wide reaching and multifaceted initiative! ”

Background:



Hello! Thanks for picking up this report and for taking the time to read about the great work we do, and the things young people achieve as part of our programme.

This work has developed out of the commitment, passion and drive to showcase the the positivity of young people across Ardoyne, Shankill and Clonard areas of Belfast. Initially based and supported solely by Ardoyne

Youth Club, Hammer Youth Club and more recently Clonard Youth Club.

R-CITY has evolved from an idea to develop leadership skills and opportunities for young people into a wide reaching and multifaceted initiative that remains fully committed to young people living in areas facing issues of conflict, mental health, gang culture, educational disadvantage and lack of aspirations.

Over the past 5 years countless young people have become connected to the various aspects of R-CITY.

The young people have directly guided us with their ideas, desires, needs and aspirations, ensuring that we grow and develop our work to cater for, not only the changing environment but taking on board and

utilising opportunities to offer new, exciting and life changing experiences.

R-CITY's work remains inextricably linked to community partners within Ardoyne, Shankill & Clonard without whose support the work would not flourish.

If you have any questions, or would like to find out more about the great things happening at R-CITY, please feel free to contact us, using the details provided at the end of this report! We love connecting with as many people as possible, and we would encourage you to follow our social media platforms for regular insight and updates on our programmes!

Alan Waite
Senior Manager
R-CITY Youth CIC

“Our ‘footprint’ logo represents young people stepping forward in all spheres of their lives; taking every opportunity presented to them and walking towards a positive future...”



Ethos:

R-CITY: is built on the ethos of instilling and developing respect for others regardless of religious or cultural background. At the core of the work, staff and volunteers strive to provide the space for participants to develop their understanding and appreciation of others, build relationships and self awareness, whilst challenging negative attitudes. From there we work to encourage young people to develop their talents, strengths and nurture their journey along their chosen progression route.

Emphasised with the logo designed for the work of R-CITY, the foot print represents the young people stepping forward in all spheres of their lives, taking every opportunity presented to them and walking towards a positive future alongside their peers.

R-CITY brings together committed staff and volunteers who share the ethos of our work and are motivated to support the young people involve and each other as facilitators. Succession planning within the staff team is critical to the overall development of the R-CITY ethos, ensuring that new staff are encouraged, supported and broaden their skills and experience as part of our team.

History:



2014:

Belfast 2 Blanco launched

The R-CITY Programme is created, founded by Alan Waite & Thomas Turley, the flagship Programme between Hammer & Youth Club begins.



2016

Clonard YC joins the programme

The R-CITY momentum continues, with a new level of scope added to the programme - Year 1, Year 2 and the introduction of R-CITY Volunteers for previous participants, which brings Peer Mentoring, Support & other forms of voluntary work within communities.

R-CITY Blanco (South Africa) Programme Launched



The Future

We're confident the future is bright for R-CITY. Over the past 5 years we've not only committed to empowering young people, but to connecting with other organisations, picking up meaningful and lasting relationships which in some cases have developing into successful partnerships - which is why we're excited to see what the future holds.

Background work begins for a new Social enterprise



2015:

Now as a Community Interest Company, and with the first programme a great success, numbers of participants increasing and recognised benefit for other community organisations and stakeholders. R-CITY also launches its new enterprise - R-CITY Coffee.



2017/18:

R-CITY launches Gang Culture Programme

With political and economic downturn, projects and programmes such as R-CITY are as important as ever in order to continue positive steps forward and for providing opportunities for young people living in communities of social deprivation. R-CITY continues providing these including several annual international experiences to countries such as South Africa.

R-CITY Summer Camp

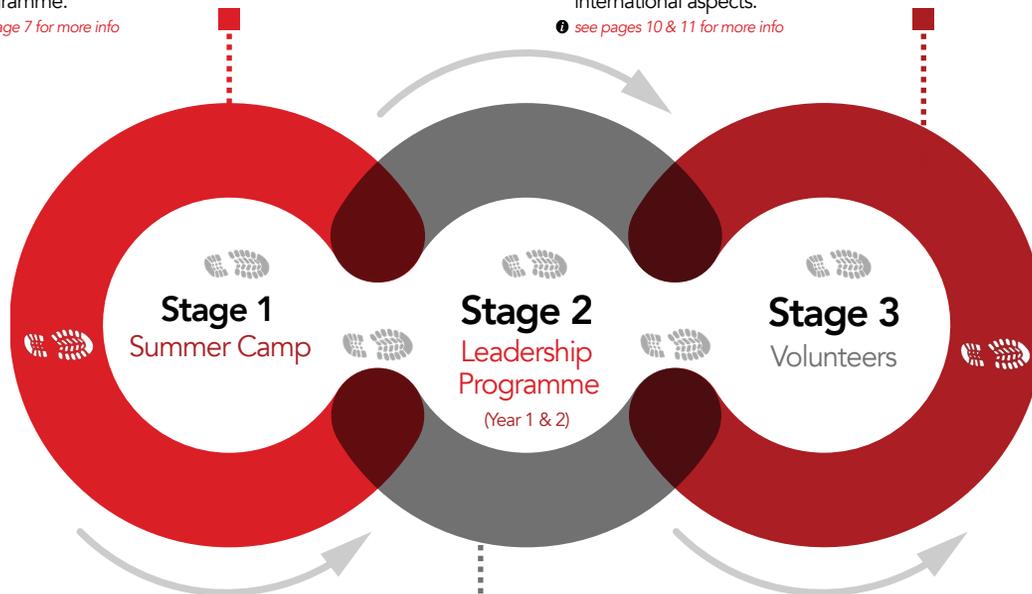
Summer camp is the initial step in the R-CITY journey, a 5 day residential experience where young people have their first taste of the facilitation style of the R-CITY programme.

i see page 7 for more info

R-CITY Volunteers

At this stage the participants are 18+ years. The breadth of opportunity and experience for this cohort represents a step up for participants and often includes regional and international aspects.

i see pages 10 & 11 for more info



R-CITY Juniors

i see page 13 for more info

R-CITY My Choices

i see page 12 for more info

R-CITY Pathways

i see page 14 for more info

R-CITY Leadership Programme (Year 1 & Year 2)

The Year & Year 2 Leadership programmes follow on from Summer Camp and operate across the respective academic years. Year 2 of the R-CITY programme is for those participants who want to continue their progression.

i see pages 8, 9 & 10 for more info

Core Programme



ABOUT OUR PROGRAMMES

What is a Community?
people coming together
to...
Home / where ya live
Youth clubs
Hoods
cops
Families

R-CITY Summer Camp:

Summer Camp is the initial step in the R-CITY journey, a 5 day residential experience where young people have their first taste of the facilitation style of the R-CITY programme. Bringing together approximately 50 young people aged 15-16 years from across Ardoyne, Shankill and Clonard, the participants are split into small groups and begin a whirlwind of workshops, activities, reflective groupwork.

Over the years the R-CITY camp has been fortunate to have had the support of a range of delivery partners in relation to the sporting & activity elements of the programme. These organisations are outlined within our Partners section.

Critical to the experience is the opportunity for the young people to spend time exploring the personal journeys that have led them to this point. Facilitated through an in-depth groupwork process, this part of the programme has the ability to create long lasting relationships between the young people that transcend the summer camp experience and have ensured the high retention rate for the year 1 & 2 programmes.



R-CITY Leadership Programme - Year 1:

The year 1 programme follows on from Summer Camp and operates across the academic year. The steps within this programme focus on:

1. Leadership & Skills Development

Accredited training delivered in partnership with Foroige Leadership for Life provides the young people with valuable UCAS points upon completion of their booklets. Approximately 40 young people per year complete the qualification and attend a graduation ceremony in Galway University.

2. Goal Setting: Personal, Social & Educational

At the beginning of the year 1 programme the participants set out their individual goals on a personal, social and educational level. This process encourages each of them to focus on specific things they want to change, work towards or achieve within that year. During the programme regular opportunities are provided to chat on a one-to-one basis about their progress.

3. Goal Setting: Personal, Social & Educational

Looking at issues within the R-Communities is vital to the development and understanding of the young people participating in the year 1 programme. Each year the programme selects relevant and arising issues in the Communities the participants live within to highlight and discuss.

4. Awareness

Regular guest speakers on topics of interest and relevance to the young people on the year 1 programme, supports participants to expand their understanding of specific communities, organisations and issues that they would otherwise be unaware of.

5. Hemsworth Project

This aspect of the programme begins with Dementia friendly training and builds into a 4 week project working alongside and gaining an understanding of the lives of people with Dementia and those who live within the Hemsworth community. The young people build relationships with the residents, enjoying games and working together around the place.

6. Christmas

Each year the participants are expected to give back to their own communities, in particular finding ways to support families who may be experiencing difficulties. This has at times been through the provision of food, clothes, toiletries and home visits.



7. Belfast 2 Blanco (B2B) Prep

Linked with the year 1 process is the beginnings of the selection process for those who have the opportunity to become involved with the B2B programme (outlined overleaf).

Year 1 young people are supported to explore their expectations & prepare for the formal interview process for this programme. Each year the group are required to self select 4 members of their group, their peer votes who are automatically offered a place on the B2B team.

R-CITY Leadership Programme - Year 2:

Year 2 of the R-CITY programme operates across the next academic year and includes those participants who want to continue their progression. The steps for year 2 are adjusted to reflect development up to that point.

1. Continuing Personal Development

Building on their experience of the year 1 programme the R-CITY participants at Year 2 level are expected to take their personal development journey to the next level. Staff and young people work through a process of reflection and affirmation, enabling each participant to take stock of the skills they have developed, experiences they have had and the changes in their lives from entering the programme. For many the process of affirmation, from peers and staff is a very enlightening experience, as they hear how they viewed by others. Throughout the year 2 programme, facilitated sessions ensure that they have the opportunity to continue to develop.

2. Goal Setting: Review, Reset, Revamp

Looking back at what they have accomplished within the first year of the programme, the participants on the year 2 programme review if they have achieved everything they had set out. The young people are encouraged to reset their goals, acknowledging that their aspirations may have changed over time and the pathway they have chosen may be different. Revamping their goals they are supported to set renewed goals for the next year and outline some of the steps needed to get there.

3. Leadership & Skills Development

Working through the final stages of their Leadership for Life training along Foroige, the participants achieve their formal qualification and secure 65 UCAS points to support their ongoing educational opportunities. Additional workshops and training opportunities are offered throughout the year 2 programme to enhance the skills that the young people develop. These have included First Aid, Safe Talk for Suicide prevention and Conflict Resolution.

4. Social Action Projects

Within the R-CITY year 2 programme, participants are expected to take the lead on a number of social action project such as charity and fundraising events and awareness raising sessions on various topics. Each year the young people designate a chosen charity to be the recipient of their fundraising efforts. Events have included sponsored walks, sponsored stay awakes, raising vital funds for organisations such as ClíC Sergeant, NI Children's Hospice and some local groups within their own communities.



R-CITY Leadership Programme - Year 2:

5. Advocacy

A crucial role for the R-CITY Year 2's is beginning to take on the role of advocating on behalf of youth within their communities. Ensuring that are showcasing themselves as positive role models for younger people in their areas and spending time highlighting not only the work they are doing but that of their peers is vital removing the negative stereotype that can exist around young and creating a positive image.

R-CITY participants are expected to attend a range of community, voluntary, statutory and political events to share their experiences of the R-CITY programme and at times their personal journeys. This has been a huge achievement of many of the young people who previously may have struggled with their self confidence.

Year 2 young people advocate also to their peers encouraging others to become involved with the various R-CITY opportunities that become available.

6. Volunteering

Each young person on the R-CITY Year 2 programme is expected to spend time volunteering within their own community/youth club. This is to ensure the skills they are developing have the chance to be utilised and refined with experience. It is their chance to give back to their area as well as act as a role model for other young people. R-CITY encourages all those involved to develop their sense of civic responsibility.

R-CITY Volunteers Programme:



Operating for those who have completed the first 2 years of the R-CITY Leadership programme, at this stage the participants are 18 years +. The breadth of opportunity and experience for this cohort represents a step up for participants and often includes regional and international aspects. The number of steps within the R-CITY Volunteers programme are reduced to 5, reflecting the intensity of the work and committed involved at this level.

1. Leadership. Facilitation. Representation.

At the point in their journey the R-CITY volunteers are involved in the facilitation of the various R-CITY programmes. Co-facilitating alongside staff on the R-CITY year 1 & 2 and Belfast 2 Blanco have been core roles for volunteers for the past 3 years. More recently volunteers have had the opportunity to take on leadership roles for the R-CITY My Choices & R-CITY Juniors programmes.

Ongoing implementation of the leadership skills is crucial in the further development of the volunteering role. Volunteers are required to continue to volunteer within their own communities and clubs alongside their work with R-CITY.

Volunteers are expected to represent R-CITY within a range of environments. These have included speaking at key events, conferences and for the purposes of government consultations.

2. Self-Directed Programming

The volunteer programme is a self-lead programme, participants choose the elements that make up their training and development across the academic year. Selecting a range of topics for their ongoing training as well as dictating the level of input required from staff.

Each year the participants have the option to include an international aspect in their volunteer programme. R-CITY volunteers have the chance to spend a period of their year 3 programme in South Africa where they work for a month amongst the townships.

3. Community Events

Large scale community events are organised each year by the volunteer team. Designed around a specific topic the volunteers develop up an event to engage young people from across the city to come together about the issue. Previous events have included 'We will walk with you' around mental health and access to services as well as support for those who are Homeless, Drugs & Alcohol Awareness and Ethnic Minorities.

4. Mentoring

R-CITY volunteers fulfil the role of peer mentors for those involved in the other R-CITY programme. Supporting them with low level issues and acting as a listening ear. This role modelling also supports help-seeking behaviours within the R-CITY young people as a large cohort.

5. Employment

Recognising the qualities, skills and experience of those who have come through the R-CITY journey, many who seek to pursue a career in youth work have the opportunity to take on part-time hours. This step is a great opportunity for the participants, the final step in their journey as volunteers and the first step in the formal career process.



R-CITY My Choices:

The R-CITY My Choices programme is that take participants from initial engagement through a process of acknowledgement, understanding and reflecting on decision making to the consequences of high level risk taking behaviour. The steps in the programmes are as follows:

1. Choices & Consequences

Facilitated through in-depth groupwork sessions the participants examine their decision making process, the choices they have made and the consequences of these. As they begin to take on personal responsibility, the participants consider what influences their choices and how they can choose to adjust this.

2. Self Awareness & Behaviour

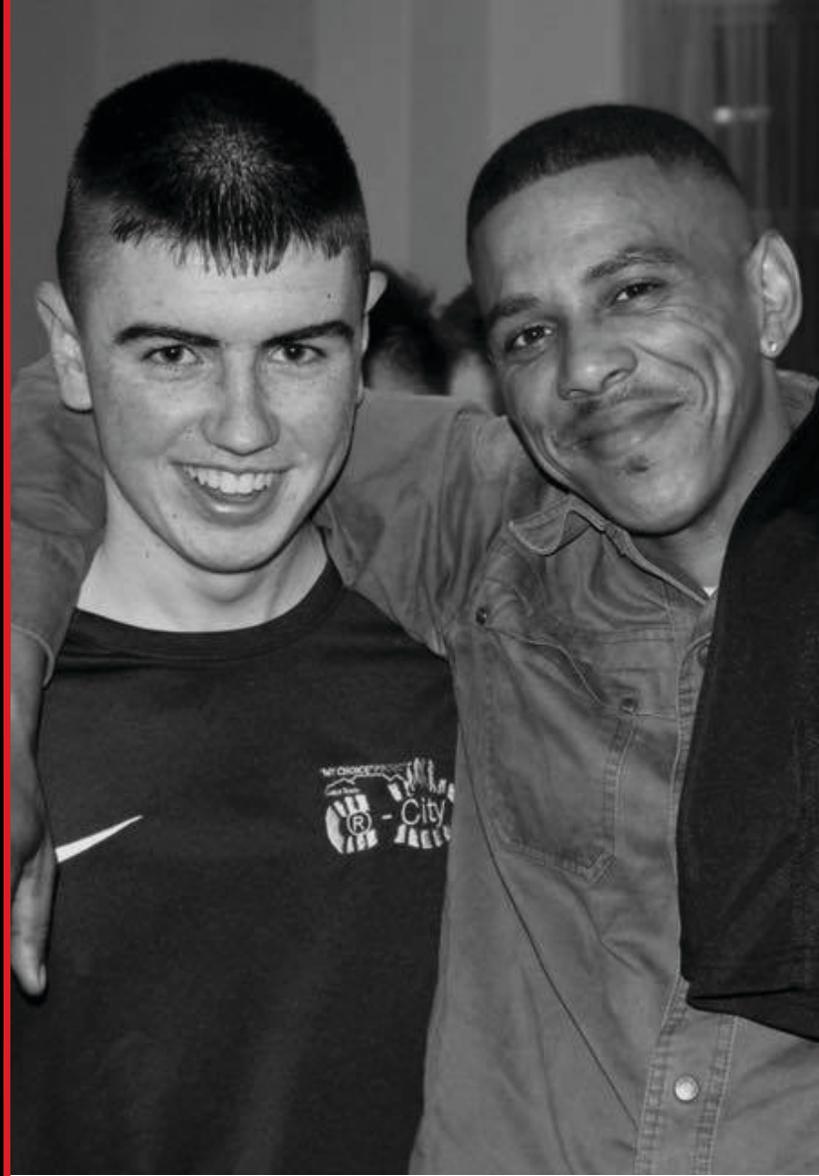
Taking time to understand themselves better, their values & beliefs, triggers etc the participants use this step to explore their individual behaviours. Recognising that behaviour is a choice linked to the journey to this point, R-CITY My Choice participants are challenged to use this understanding to move in a positive direction.

3. Gang Culture

Recognising the link between individual behaviour and those of gangs, the R-CITY My Choice group review the emerging gang culture across their Communities and how this compares to the culture in other countries.

4. International Experience

The final step in the R-CITY My Choice programme is an international visit, currently to Capetown South Africa. During this visit the participants have the chance to see first hand the impact of gang culture on communities and their residents. They spend time with Ex Ganga members listening to their lives stories. This experience is for many of the participants first time away from home, giving them time to reflect on the value they place upon things such as family & friends.



R-CITY Juniors Programme:



The is the most recently developed programme within R-CITY and takes in participants aged 13-14 who are keen to be involved in cross community work. Again this programme has been included as a direct result of requests from young people to have a focused programme for their age group prior to them hoping to move into the R-CITY Leadership programme.

1. Good Relations

Building relationships with young people from different communities and gaining and understanding of the similarities and differences between them. The R-CITY Juniors will also take time to understand other relevant communities and ethnic backgrounds.

2. Community Awareness

R-CITY Juniors will be facilitated through a social action project, supporting them to give back to their own communities.

3. Friendship & Fun

The main step in the R-CITY Juniors programme is creating friendships amongst the young people through activities, group work and residential. Most importantly this programme is fun and creates a desire for the young people to stayed involved with R-CITY.



R-CITY Pathways:

R-CITY recognises that young people have a wide variety of choice in terms of their future pathways, educational journeys, careers etc. Based on the overall ethos of the programme, R-CITY takes seriously the commitment to walk along this pathway with our participants. Over the past few years R-CITY has had the pleasure of linking programme participants with a range of diverse opportunities through business links, colleagues and random connections. We are very proud to have supported countless young people into work through our link with The Wall Group and a number of other employers.

We have also been particularly successful in relation to those who choose to move into Youth Work as a career, with large numbers of our young people going on to complete the Certificate in Youthwork, securing places on the Degree in Community Youthwork and some who are on the verge of becoming fully qualified.

R-CITY is honoured to have played a role in ensuring that young people from Ardoyne, Shankill and Clonard have been supported along this journey.

R-CITY Mentoring:

Recognising that at times young people require individualised and tailored support alongside the group programmes they are involved in, R-CITY offers mentoring space. The mentoring support is brief focused intervention that links with other agencies when necessary, acknowledging when additional or more specialist supports are required.

Staff are encouraged to take time to support the participants of the R-CITY programmes through what could be described as the most stressful and emotionally challenging period of their lives so far. From joining the programme at around age 15, R-CITY walks alongside the young people into their adulthood at 18-19, which is often a very difficult time academically, socially and for some on a very practical level.

Mentoring support is also provided around the area of youth work progression. Staff and volunteers often guide participants in relation to training options, support them to prepare for interviews for courses and job opportunities. This more adhoc but critical mentoring role has led to high numbers R-CITY programme participants securing places on the University Foundation and degree programmes as well as part time & full time positions within community and voluntary organisations across Belfast.

Partners:

Since its inception R-CITY has worked with a wide range of community, statutory and funding partners, creating links that enable ongoing programme development and broaden the depth of the opportunities provided for young people.



R-CITY Coffee:

Based at the Houben Centre, North Belfast and set within the grounds of Holy Cross Chapel, this social enterprise Coffee Shop represents the coming together of two communities. With entrances on both sides of the contentious Ardoyne & Shankill divide, which has been the scene of a vast amount of sectarian violence over the decades, we welcome all to share great food in this notorious hot spot.

Building on the R-CITY ethos, the Coffee Shop idea stemmed from the young people who envisaged a mutual space between their divided communities where they could socialise in a safe environment.

R-CITY Coffee Shop has grown and developed since it opened in December 2015. We have a great base of local customers who use it on a daily basis, as well as hosting special events, themed days and outside catering. The Coffee Shop has been delighted to give back to the Ardoyne & Shankill communities and those who live locally, through a range of sponsorships and fundraising efforts. These have included Glenveigh School, children's charities, youth sporting teams and many more.



Belfast 2 Blanco:

This international programme links the young people involved with the R-CITY Programme to the townships of Blanco, South Africa. Born out of a relationship between R-CITY founders, Alan Waite & Thomas Turley and this captivating place, the B2B programme has seized the opportunity to broaden the horizons of the young people we work with, support them to go on a personal journey of discovery and to develop an appreciation of what is truly valuable to them.

Since its inception in 2013, those young people interested in becoming involved with this programme go through a process of interview and selection to ensure that those chosen are ready for the level of commitment, in terms of time, fund raising and the need to step out of their comfort zone.

The group spend approximately 9 months preparing as a team and as individuals for the international experience, using an in-depth and tailored groupwork approach. This enables the staff to support the young people to develop their roles within the team, construct a programme of activities for their time in the township and agree their individual goals.



During the international, the B2B Team spend their time linking with children, young people and elderly people in Blanco, through R-CITY links with the community, schools, churches and the local home for the elderly. Each member of the team shares their experience within a series of on location blogs available on the B2B website.

The site also contains on location videos & info on the current B2B team members.



www.belfast2blanco.com

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