

VITAE (Short)
Paul J. Smyth
Youth Engagement Specialist
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Current Role

Paul is a freelance trainer, facilitator, and youth and/or community engagement specialist. He works on a wide range of projects locally and internationally that draw on his experience of designing and implementing ground-breaking projects with young people, and with others in communities. His interests include addressing the impact of violence (he is a founder of the #StopAttacks campaign), preventing the violent radicalization of young people, diversity and inclusion, and the engagement of people in decisions that impact on their lives. Recent clients include the British Council (Lebanon), Nextdoor UK, Ark Housing, the Building Change Trust, Community Evaluation Northern Ireland, and the Voice of Young People in Care. He recently made a film with a group of teenagers about the impact of paramilitary violence on youth in Northern Ireland. This film is being used as a resource by schools and youth clubs.

Internationally, he was an expert trainer on two Erasmus Plus projects on Inter-cultural Competence (one with youth work students and one with Youth Work trainers and senior managers) and co-designed and led an international study visit for youth workers to Belfast and Birmingham looking at the role of youth work in tackling the violent radicalisation of youth. He has also worked as an expert advisor for the Westminster Foundation for Democracy on youth engagement in Lebanon and Bahrain and most recently for the British Council in Lebanon.

He was the Northern Ireland organizer for [Nextdoor UK](#) and continues to work locally for the company on a freelance basis. Nextdoor is the world's largest network for the neighbourhood and one of the fastest growing social networks. It is currently in 8 European countries the US and Australia and continues to expand apace. Paul was part of a team involved in a pre-launch pilot and ensured that Northern Ireland was the fastest growing region using Nextdoor. He is currently helping to get public agencies in Northern Ireland onto the platform.

Previous Role

Paul was previously the CEO of Public Achievement. The organisation developed a model known as "Civic Youth Work" and ran a series of groundbreaking projects that supported better engagement between young people from tougher social realities, and various kinds of public authority – including museums, the fire services, the police and with politicians. Under his leadership the organisation won a raft of awards, including a Big Society Award from the UK Prime Minister (2012), a TechforGood Award (2014) and an award for the most innovative European volunteer project in Europe.

The organisation was best known for the WIMPS (Where Is My Public Servant?) project and website – [wimps.tv](#) – a unique project which helped young people to use media to address important issues, and to engage directly with elected representatives. He raised over £7 million in funding for the charity over its 16-year lifespan.

EDUCATION (Key qualifications)

Institution	Degree	Year	Field of Study
University of Ulster	Adv Dip	2013	Sustainable Investment for the 3 rd Sector
University of Ulster	MSc	2010	Innovation Management in the Public Sector
University of Ulster	Certificate	2005	Sustainable Futures – Managing Nonprofits
Brunel University	M.A.	1998	Youth and Community Studies
University of Ulster	B.A.	1988	Fine Arts (Honors)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Institution	Year	Position
Nextdoor.com	2016	City Launcher, Belfast
Public Achievement, Northern Ireland	2003 - 2016	CEO
Achieve Enterprises, NI	2009 –2016	Board member/MD (Social Enterprise)
University of Minnesota	2003 & 2005	Visiting Lecturer – Youth and Conflict
Queens University, Belfast	2008 –2011	Part-time Lecturer, Graduate School of Education
University of Ulster	1998 - 2007	Part-time Lecturer
Youth Council for Northern Ireland	1998-2002	Community Relations Development Officer
University of Ulster, School of Education	1996 – 1998	Research Officer, Speak Your Piece project

Recent Publications

Smyth, P. (2017), *Stop Attacks – Beyond the Shrug: Addressing Paramilitary Attacks on Young People in Northern Ireland* (available on Wiseabap.com)

Mattessich, P and Smyth, P (2018), *Evaluation of WIMPS – A Case Study of Civic Youth Work Evaluation*, in Evaluating Civic Youth Work, Oxford University Press, Oxford

Smyth, P, (2012) *Citizenship and the Ceasefire Generation*, in Adolescent Behaviour, Bassani C (Ed), Psychology Research Progress, Nova, New York

Smyth, P, (2007) *The Stumbling Progress of Community Relations Youth Work in Northern Ireland, 1968 – 2005*, in Work With Youth in Divided and Contested Societies, Rotterdam: Sense

VeLure Roholt, R, and Smyth P (2007) *Civic Youth Work and Implications for Service Learning – Lessons from Northern Ireland*, Civic Engagement and Higher Education- International Perspectives, Ashgate, London

Recent Presentations

Stop Attacks Seminar, Ulster University (May 2019) – main organizer, facilitator and plenary remarks

Ending the Harm Campaign Launch (Oct 2018), member of panel discussion at launch

Department of Justice (April 2018) – Tackling Paramilitarism Event – speaker on expert panel with Monica McWilliams, Tim Mairs (PSNI), Anthony Harbinson (DOJ) and Patricia Downey (playright – “Banjaxed”)

Education Authority Youth Service (January 2018) – co facilitator with Dr Duncan Morrow of event for 200 youth workers

Transitional Justice Initiative (UU/U of Minnesota), Belfast, June 2017 – The Impact of Ongoing Paramilitary Violence

University of Minnesota (March 2017), presenting to a range of professionals on the role of youth work in addressing conflict in Northern Ireland

Young Digital Team Competition – keynote speaker at launch event on policing and youth engagement, March 2016

International

- 2019 (June) Expert advisor to Lebanese Government (via British Council Lebanon) on young people and preventing violent extremism
- 2019 (Apr) Expert input to a RAN (Radicalisation Awareness Network) seminar in Rome on “Children Growing Up in Extremist Families”.
- 2017, (Dec) Expert advisor to the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in Bahrain – on the establishment of a participative structure for young people
- 2017 (Feb), participant in the International Fund for Ireland’s Ambit programme, NY and DC
- 2016 (June) Advisory visit to Beirut, Lebanon for the Westminster Foundation for Democracy on youth engagement
- 2011 (July) represented Public Achievement at Atlantic Philanthropies youth network, NY
- 2010 (Feb) ran training in Lebanon for youth workers, teachers and NGO leaders in Baalbek and Tripoli
- 2008, November, led delegation to Israel, field trip with Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service looking at road safety innovations with young drivers
- 2008, February, Led training in Beirut, Lebanon for British Council to local NGOs
- 2007, October, Hosted visit of Basque Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport to Northern Ireland.
- 2006 November, led Northern Ireland policy level delegation in exchange with Basque Government
- 2006 October, participant in US State Department visit via Boston College, looking at eGovernance
- 2006 April, delegation to Israel looking at collaboration with Jewish and Palestinian communities
- 2004, Nov/Dec led delegation to Jordan and Israel, looking at Youth Work in Contested Spaces
- 2004, March – trained students across Palestinian West Bank in democratic youth work practice
- 2003 and 2005 (July) University of Minnesota, Youth Studies – lecture on youth cultures in Northern Ireland

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE (Recent)

- Board Member (Trustee), Ballynafeigh Community Development Association (April 2017 present)
- Board Member, Northern Ireland Youth Work Alliance (current)
- Board member Achieve Enterprises – 2009 – 2016
- Advisor to the Forum for Victims and Survivors 2012 – 2013
- Member of the YouthNet Executive Committee, 2009 - 2011
- EU funding Committee Member, Community Relations Council 2004 – 2008
- Board Member, St Columb’s Park House Reconciliation Centre, Derry, March 2005 – Jan 2007