

Our definition of violence

We are defining violence broadly - whether physical violence, mental violence or bullying.

This is partially captured by the World Health Organisation's definition of violence:

"the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation."

However the focus of the campaign is on the 'everyday' experiences of violence – people to people violence, whether in the home, the school, the community, the workplace, the sports field or on the streets.

How we want to work

'Why Violence?' seeks to bring together the diverse energies and talents working across the spectrum of violence reduction, from bullying and intimidation to assault and murder. By providing a unifying brand or imprimatur which can be used by all of these groups, 'Why Violence?' can help to establish a greater influence than the sum of its allies. Using the 21st September to 2nd October as a focal point, 'Why Violence?' aims to encourage, support and co-ordinate the staging of events and activities that will encourage all sections of society to focus on the possibility and necessity of violence reduction.

Working with others

We want to build a broad-based alliance of groups across society each working in their own way with their own constituency to affirm the idea that violence is not normal, not acceptable and that there are positive alternatives to violence. This could be community groups, national voluntary groups, state agencies, schools, sports organisations, faith-based organisations, trade unions, media, professional groups and many more. We want to bring people together under the neutral

'Why violence?' brand.

In structure, 'Why Violence?' is a central committee which will promote the work of other groups whose aims fit within its remit.

What we're asking of you

We hope to make concrete the creative ideas that may be taking shape in many groups and agencies in various parts of Ireland which could contribute to this 'Why Violence?' Festival - drawing attention to the need for everyone to be an advocate for the elimination of violence from our lives. The 'Festival' activities might include concerts, film screenings, exhibitions, lectures, workshops, special school activities, conferences, seminars, carnivals, fun-runs, competitions, etc

Can your group produce a play, run a debate, organise a quiz, a symposium, a lecture evening, share stories, form a neighbourhood group - or anything else you may think of to encourage more people to think and act for violence reduction?

Such activities will be run, and funded, by each individual, organisation or group, with overall co-ordination by a central 'Why Violence?' committee.

As individuals and groups come forward to engage with the campaign we hope that the membership of this central committee will grow and evolve and a natural, though largely 'behind the scenes' leadership will emerge. This leadership would over time take responsibility for developing a strategy for the campaign beyond September 2009.

For further information, contact:

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Why Violence?

Who are we

A small group of concerned people disturbed by the rising levels and brutality of violence in Irish society, North and South, has come together seeking to build a campaign to reduce violence in Ireland.

Initially several of the group came together as Quakers, but this is not a Quaker campaign, nor the campaign of any one agency or institution - rather we want to build a truly broad-based alliance of individuals and organisations across Ireland who will work under a neutral 'Why Violence?' identity to build a movement to change attitudes, beliefs and behaviours about violence, across Irish society.

What we believe

We believe that the escalation of violence in Irish society calls for a comprehensive approach to bring together individuals and organisations across the island of Ireland, North and South, to work together to reduce violence.

We believe that violence, and the fear of violence, affects everyone in our society.

We believe that violence is not acceptable and not inevitable.

We believe that violence is preventable – and that there are always positive alternatives to violence.

We believe that violence is learned from many sources, from family members, from peers, from real or fictional role models, from video games, at home, at school, at work, on the sports field, from television, at the computer or in the cinema.

We believe that everyone – in their personal capacity and/or their professional capacity – can play a role, indeed has a responsibility to play a role, in reducing and ultimately preventing violence; by changing themselves and working with others to bring about change in their own small sphere of influence – be it in the family, the neighbourhood, the local community, the school, the workplace or religious institution.

We believe that by better understanding and tackling the everyday expressions of violence - the violence in the home and in our local communities and institutions - we will eventually tackle violence across all of society.

The Change We Want to Bring About

Our vision is of an Ireland in which no person has to live in fear of violence

How 'why violence?' hopes to contribute to that change

The goal of the campaign is to reduce the social acceptance of violence in Irish Society.

Our short-term objective is to mark the period 21st September to 2nd October 2009 (from International Day of Peace to International Day of Non-violence) with a wide variety of co-ordinated, visible, vibrant activities - the first of an annual marking of this 'Why Violence?' Festival'.

In the longer term we want to make every person in Ireland aware that violence is harmful at all levels, and that it is every individual's personal responsibility, and within every individual's capacity, to work towards its reduction. To do nothing is to allow the current unspoken acceptance of violence to develop still further.

A great deal of valuable work is being done to reduce violence – including work to provide services for people experiencing violence and work on developing policies to reduce violence.

'Why violence?' wants to complement this work by:

- ensuring that the 'festival of violence reduction' is visibly and vibrantly marked over the period 21st September – 2nd October, across the island of Ireland;
- ensuring that the action of coming together over this week causes individuals and organisations across the country to commit to work together on an on-going basis to build a movement to reduce violence in Ireland;
- working with a core of committed individuals and

agencies to develop a common, shared strategy to take forward 'Why Violence?' after September 2009;

- creating an enabling environment in which the media communicate and reinforce the messages of the 'Why Violence?' campaign;
- encouraging people across society to recognize that each one of us carries some responsibility for the levels of violence in our society (men to women, women to men, men to men, women to women, parents to children, children to each other, teachers to children, people on the sports field, youths and others on the streets) and that we all have a role to play in reducing that violence;
- providing a common, shared identity under which a wide range of individuals, organisations and initiatives can work together to reduce violence.

We see 'Why violence?' as a lens. On one hand, it will draw focus on to the need for violence reduction. On the other, it will seek to magnify awareness of work being done on the causes and effects of violence - acts and behaviours - throughout society.

We are focusing on violence reduction because we do not anticipate an end to violence in the lifetime of the campaign - reduction year by year seems a practical proposition, total eradication may take a generation or more.

Timeframe

The immediate focus of 'Why Violence?' is for the period 21st September to 2nd October 2009. Thereafter we want to see this 'Why Violence?' period marked, visibly and vibrantly, ever year.

At this stage we are thinking of a five-year horizon for 'Why Violence?' but ultimately this question of time-frame will be a decision of those people who become the core leadership of the campaign.