

£255,000 drive to reduce divisions in Northern Ireland town.



Graffiti art and DJ classes are the unlikely activities being used to bring young people together in one of Northern Ireland's most divided towns.

Protestant and Catholic youngsters from Lurgan will also be invited to take part in film making and amateur dramatics as part of the £255,000 initiative to build better cross community relations.

The International Fund for Ireland (IFI) backed project will initially run for two years in an effort to foster new relationships in a place with an unwanted reputation for sectarian problems.

Supported by the IFI's Community Bridges Programme, it will bring together key stakeholders across education, politics and business as well as from the community and voluntary sectors to develop a strategic plan to tackle division.

A team of young ambassadors aged 15-19 have also been recruited from both sides of the religious divide to promote community relations in the town.

At the launch of the Lurgan Town Project, Anne Henderson, from the IFI, said: "The International Fund for Ireland remains focused on creating innovative ways to promote peace building and reconciliation and help unionists and nationalists throughout the island of Ireland to learn, work and live together in a shared future.

"The town of Lurgan has suffered disproportionately during the decades of conflict and civil unrest in Northern Ireland with the result that neighbours have lived side by side for generations in fear, isolation and violence.

"This project is the first critical step towards bringing these communities together, to work together to create the conditions for reconciliation and build a better future which can be truly shared."

The project has been developed in partnership with Craigavon Borough Council and will be managed by the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) Youth Service.

Gerard Doran, head of youth services, at SELB said: "The SELB Youth Service is committed to the delivery of youth work practice that seeks to address the fundamental impact of community relations on the lives of young people in our communities."

Press Association