

Protestant future friend or foe

ALL young Catholics in the Northwest have dreams for the future but do they want to share these with Protestants?

Whether it's to go to university or to live in America, to become a teacher or a farmer, or to be married and have a family young people growing up in Springhill, a single-identity estate in Strabane are very clear on where they want to be in 10 years time.

Ask them if they will be close friends with or colleagues with Protestants in 2020 and they are not quite as sure. We explored the issue of sectarianism through interviews, definitions and word associations. Riots, flags, murder, discrimination, graffiti, attacks, politicians, fighting, war and Northern Ireland were just some of the words the young people associated with sectarianism.



They defined sectarianism as 'your religion and where you're from' and 'peer pressure'. Kirsten Maguire is 11. She said: "I wouldn't want to work with Protestants. They're a bit different because they've a different religion" Ciarnan Maguire (15), went to America with a Protestant friend. He said: "I haven't seen him since P7. He was sound."

Ciarnan added: "Having a Protestant girlfriend depends on what they look like and what way they go on. There'd be more things the same between Catholics and Protestants than different."

Dennis Diver (13), has Protestant friends. He said: "I'd see them when I go up to Sion at weekends. I would like more but wouldn't want to work with Protestants because they'd be different. It would be good craic if Protestants lived in Springhill. Protestants are different because of the way they look. I wouldn't fight with someone because they have a different religion."

15-year-old Harry Roche often plays football and runs around with Protestants. He said: "Catholics are good, Protestants can be cheeky and start calling names to Catholics. Young people don't mix because of religion. Protestants are different by the way they go on and talk, they talk different from us." Harry added: "To stop sectarianism, you'd have to live in a different country or stay away or whoever's doing it, break it up with them."

Dylan Moore, (13), has no Protestant friends: "Protestant and Catholic young people don't mix because that's just the way it goes" None of the young people interviewed thought it would be good to see Protestants move into the Springhill estate, all agreeing that it would lead to fighting.

Most of them thought that Protestants were different to them in some way and they had little or no interest in getting to know Protestants, either as friends or in the workplace when they're older. But maybe that's because they haven't had many opportunities to meet Protestants and their views might change in the future.

Sectarianism still seems to be part of the mindset of these young people in Strabane so more activities are needed to get the young people there to mix together so that they don't grow up to be strangers.

About this article

Story by: Catherine, Louise, Darren and Yasmin from Springhill Youth Club as part of a Headliners Foyle outreach project exploring sectarianism.

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