STEP *(South Tyrone Empowerment Programme)*.

STEP is a community anchor organisation working directly with individuals and neighbourhood groups ‘furthest from the top table’ to participate actively in building and sustaining their communities. From its origins in 1996 as a volunteer network of town and village neighbourhoods in the N. Ireland borough council of Dungannon & South Tyrone as it emerged from 40 years of violent conflict, STEP adopted a rights and responsibilities, social enterprise approach to community local empowerment- seeing community assets as human (physical, intellectual, emotional and social); financial (public funds; private philanthropy and earned income) and physical assets (owned; leased; borrowed).

Essentially a ‘one-stop-shop’ for information, and advice, confidence and competence building, training and learning, partnership building, project design and delivery and strategic community planning, STEP has steadily supported local community organisations to acquire, hold in common trust and sustain a significant portfolio community assets. The sustainable activities directly and indirectly sustained as a result range from social enterprises providing workspace, community centres, interpreting, translation services; diversity awareness; and cultural competence training consultative services; to services free at the point of delivery: organising, learning; advocacy, campaigning, disability day care and day opportunities, afterschool and homework clubs, bilingual language clubs, legal advice on discrimination, immigration, employment and welfare, housing support and language support including English classes for speakers of other languages. STEP works with these communities of place and interest to ensure the diversity of their voices are heard by policy makers and legislators.