

T:buc

Changing for the better, together



*People
and Peace
March 2024*



Northern Ireland
Executive

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Foreword



I am delighted to welcome you to the first T:BUC Engagement Forum of 2024 and I look forward to an exciting series of events throughout the year. The Engagement Forum is, of course, accompanied by this newsletter which provides an opportunity for us all to read about a selection of the fantastic work that continues to be progressed through T:BUC and wider Good Relations delivery.

More broadly, today's Engagement Forum will give attendees the opportunity to look at what people are doing to contribute to peace in Northern Ireland and what peace looks like to all who live here. So, it's fitting that today's event is preceded by the Good Relations Awards. This is an important event in the calendar because it gives us all an opportunity to acknowledge those who are working hard to foster Good Relations across the country. I hope these awards are a reminder that your tireless effort does not go unnoticed – it is easy to overlook how much is achieved and accomplished on a daily basis and I think it's important that events such as these are used to pause momentarily and reflect on progress made to date. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Award Partners who work with us to increase the profile of this event and to encourage local groups, individuals, and organisations from across the region to get involved and submit nominations for the Good Relations Awards.

On behalf of both the Executive Office and the Community Relations Council, I would like to take this opportunity to thank for you coming along today and I hope you enjoy the event.

Chris Gardner

Head of T:buc & Good Relations Division
The Executive Office

CRC News Stories

New Research Investigates the Role of Trust as Key Factor for Reconciliation / Community Relations in Schools

New research undertaken through a partnership between the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations at Coventry University and Community Relations in Schools (CRIS) was launched on the *International Day of Peace, Thursday September 21st* as part of Good Relations Week 2023. The event took place in the Long Gallery, Parliament Building, and was entitled, *Peace Builds at the Speed of Trust: Exploring "Trust Indicators" in Reconciliation.*

The Community Relations Council supports CRIS through its [Core Funding Scheme](#)

The research examined the role of trust-building in CRIS's school-based reconciliation initiatives. Trust, while taken for granted as important, has not been deeply unpacked or examined to better understand its more particular role in facilitating a move towards reconciliation. One outcome of the research was the development of a set of "trust indicators" that may be utilised to gauge how collaboration facilitates a foundation of trust between participants.

At the launch event, researchers provided an overview of the case study which examined CRIS's model of peacebuilding: Good Relations and Collaborative Education (GRACE). GRACE is operationalised through CRIS's *whole school approach* working with children, teachers, principals, parents and carers to involve them in Good Relations programmes. Since 2019, CRIS has partnered with The

Executive Office's Urban Villages Initiative to roll out Buddy Up! its flagship Inter-School Buddy System across all five Urban Village locations. Schools involved in Buddy Up! were among those taking part in the research.

Following the research launch, an expert panel discussed the findings in light of the current social policy landscape such as the recent review of *Together: Building a United Community* (T:BUC) and developments within shared and collaborative educational approaches.

The panel included:

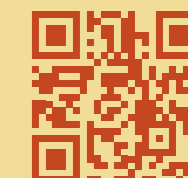
- Dr Jacqueline Irwin (CEO of the Community Relations Council)
- Chris Gardner (Head of Good Relations at The Executive Office)
- Linsey Farrell (Deputy Secretary for Education Policy and Children's Services at the Department of Education)
- Research team members: Dr Charis Rice (Associate Professor, Coventry University) and Dr Emily Stanton (Director of Programmes at CRIS)

The panel considered the implications of this research across policy, practice and research for strengthening social cohesion outcomes for peace and reconciliation across both education and Good Relations.

The research was funded in part by: the [Community Relations Council's Small Grants Scheme](#); The Irish Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Reconciliation Funds; and The Urban Villages Initiative through the Northern Ireland Executive Office as part of the *Together Building a United Community* (T:BUC) Strategy.

Discover More

Find out more about on Community Relations in Schools (CRIS) or get a copy of the research here



Chris Gardner, Lisa Dietrich, Jacqueline Irwin and Martin McDonald.

Belfast School Children on the Court with Boston Celtics Co-Owner

Belfast school children were shooting hoops with the co-owner of a famous basketball team during a cross-community initiative.

The co-owner of the Boston Celtics, Stephen Pagliuca, met school children participating in a project organised by PeacePlayers Northern Ireland. Peaceplayers is supported by the Community Relations [Council through its Core Funding Scheme](#).

The basketball session was part of a 'twinning programme' that enables children from Protestant and Catholic primary schools to learn and play together to form lasting friendships. The Education Authority, Shared Education department, helps to fund the Twinning Programmes in Belfast.

Children from three Belfast primary schools attended the event held in Queen's PEC: Donegall Road PS; St Bride's PS; and St John the Baptist PS.

The children were treated to a one-of-a-kind experience when Stephen Pagliuca joined them during the basketball session. Boston Celtics are an American professional basketball team that plays in the NBA (National Basketball Association).

[PeacePlayers Northern Ireland](#), which is celebrating its 20th anniversary, uses basketball to build lasting friendships among young people from communities with histories of conflict.

Aoife Redmond, PeacePlayers regional programme co-ordinator, spoke about the wonderful opportunity that the children had to meet with such an influential businessman and investor.

"Stephen Pagliuca, alongside Marc Mulholland from Basketball NI, both got involved, doing some shooting practice,"

Aoife said.

"They chatted to the children, asking them what inspired them."

"They were keen to learn about what the children were doing, what the Twinning Programme is about, and were asking the children and those who run the sessions about it from their perspective."

The children were participating in a six-week programme of activities, as part of the Twinning Programme.

"The Twinning Programme twins Protestant and Catholic schools together through a six-week programme of activities," Aoife said. "It brings the schools together through basketball, which the children love."

"The programme aims to allow the children to form good friendships and relationships with each other. The children come from different communities, so it is important to bring them together - they are our hope for the future."



Inspired to Act Exploring Faith-Based Peacebuilding | Thrive Ireland

Inspired to Act is an inspirational Good Relations Podcast developed by Thrive Ireland. Its ethos is to inspire and reinvigorate vision and practice in peacebuilding in the faith sector in Northern Ireland.

The project was supported by the Community Relations Council through its [CR/CD Small Grants Scheme](#).

The podcast series, comprised of eight episodes, is intended to stimulate new thinking and engagement in peacebuilding initiatives and has interviewed four local and four global peacebuilders.

"Making a huge difference"

Diane Holt, director at Thrive Ireland, hopes the series can make a huge difference to local peacebuilders by helping to inspire them with local and global practitioners.

"Thrive Ireland is a relatively new and small Christian organisation who want to make a big difference," Diane said.

"As their Director I have had the privilege of working with peacebuilders in East and South Africa and learning from some amazing examples in Rwanda, Kenya and Zimbabwe."



Diane also believes that stories of faith-based peacebuilding work in Northern Ireland quite often go unheard.

"Storytelling is so captivating," Diane explained, *"and we wanted to bring stories of inspiring but ordinary people from both the wider world and Northern Ireland. I wanted to hear what it was that inspired these ordinary people to do some extraordinary things."*

Podcasting is a powerful medium

Diane has recognised that podcasting is a powerful medium for widening their organisation's storytelling venture. And she utilised the experience of Will Leitch, who had worked in broadcast and journalism.

"We thought long and hard about sustaining the series," Will said. *"Many podcasters start well but run out of steam a few episodes in. Then their audience melts away. The issue is to have enough to say to keep producing the podcast again and again and again."*

Will also emphasised how important it was to think about production quality, experience and judgement, and the overall tone.

He said: *"It is the experience and instinct of an experienced producer that helps us get the tone and sense of each episode just right."*

Choosing the right themes The themes of the podcast range from issues such as legacy of the past, remembering and memorial, personal reconciliation, and many more.

"Because of some of my work in partnership with the International Development Agency, Tearfund, I have been working alongside clergy from the Diocese of Jerusalem," Diane said.

"The Diocese takes in the countries of Israel, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. At this time of war in Israel and Gaza, we felt that it would be helpful to hear directly from Church Leaders in Israel and on the West Bank. So we recorded a podcast episode with the Vicar of Nazareth and the Vicar of Nablus. It gives real insight into the challenges and realities and multiple identities of Christians in the region. From discussions with people following the episode, I think some misconceptions were broken down."

Important considerations for success

Diane highlighted that there were several important considerations necessary for a successful project.

"To be honest, we could not have done it without the CRC funding," Diane said, *"and even at that I underestimated the costs. We needed a consultant to help us produce and present a professional Podcast. Podcast hosting was vital for the Podcast to upload to all the usual places where people listen."*

The project necessitated many hours of input from Diane and several other supporters:

"But without the initial CRC funding," she said, *"Inspired to Act would still be a dream!"*

ON AIR



Listen to the Podcast

You can listen to the podcast series here:



Beyond Skin Using The Arts for Peace

Programme News

Enabling the arts as a powerful tool to develop a more peaceful, equal and intercultural society. Since 2004, the Community Relations Council has provided Beyond Skin with funding and support, empowering the organisation with the resources to use the power of creativity, music and the Arts to foster Good Relations across Northern Ireland. This year the organisation is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

CRC has provided ongoing support to Beyond Skin through its [Community Relations/Cultural Diversity Small Grants Scheme](#).

This support has helped Beyond Skin to creatively overcome barriers in society and forge community connections.

Following a spike in racial hatred across Northern Ireland in 2004, musician Darren Ferguson founded Beyond Skin, an intersectional art collective dedicated to using music and the arts to build peace.

"For somebody born during the worst year of the troubles (1972) in Belfast," Darren says, *"for it to be referenced by international press in 2003 as race hate capital was something I was not very proud of."*

We are better than that. So, I started putting together the elements to do something about it."



The 100

Over the years, Beyond Skin has initiated numerous arts projects in Northern Ireland, and further afield, to develop a more peaceful, equal, and intercultural society free from racism and sectarianism. One such notable project is The 100.

"CRC supported us through the Covid-19 pandemic to deliver The 100," Darren says. *"A hundred women of all ages and backgrounds living in Northern Ireland were given a page each in a book to express their identity and sense of belonging. The book was planted as part of a time capsule in October 2022 for 100 years, to be reopened in October 2122."*

"The ladies who contributed to the book were asked to think about, 'How would I want to be represented, what would I want to be represented, what would I want to say?' and the result is an ornate book which will be kept for 100 years."

One Giant Leap

Beyond Skin's first ever project was influenced by a documentary entitled, 1 Giant Leap. CRC funded the film makers and other musicians involved in 1 Giant Leap to do a series of film screenings, talks and a concert in Belfast 2004.

This then inspired Beyond Skin to create an intercultural music project of their own.

"CRC provided us with funding to hire a recording studio, and we invited people to come and make music, it was as simple as that, and we didn't know who would come or where they would come from - but an album of music tracks came out of it."

"We worked with Francie McPeake IV, the studio owner, musician, and producer from the well-known McPeake family - and he loved it. It was that excitement of not knowing who was coming through the door - you'd have somebody from Poland playing guitar and someone from Venezuela would come along and put down a rhythm track and we just layered it up."

The Motion Project became a diversity education tour programme in schools, community groups and festival performances with a large diverse group of musicians. The project ran for eight years.

Programme News

Musicians Artists Refugee Resettlement Scheme

Most recently, CRC has supported part of Beyond Skin's Musicians Artists Refugee Resettlement Scheme (MARRS), which is designed to help people with asylum-seeking status or refugee status.

"This is another level where we take our 19 years' experience of using music and the arts as a way to start a dialogue," Darren says.

"A lot of other organisations are meeting refugees' immediate needs as they welcome them here, for example, healthcare and so on, but Beyond Skin is injecting a bit of fun stuff as well as having a purpose to utilise and develop their skills."

Many of those new arrivals are currently living in temporary housing or institutional hotel accommodation.

"It doesn't allow people to integrate and it's not good for your mental health to be accommodated in institutional hotels," Darren says. "So, we're supporting a series of workshops and projects that are about getting people meeting other communities, while doing stuff for the arts."

MARRS was originally set up in 2021 in response to the Afghanistan crisis but has evolved to support people from many different countries, helping over 200 people so far.

And even though there's a difficult cost-of-living crisis happening, there's still positive peacebuilding taking place.

"People coming here from war-torn countries have many great skills to offer," Darren says. "Refugees are creative people, athletes, artists, musicians... These are people who want to be here and build new skills, and Beyond Skin wants to help."

Since 2004 Beyond Skin has developed and delivered over 5,000 projects in the form of workshops, productions, exhibitions and events. CRC have very much been a key part of our journey impacting the lives of tens of thousands.

Discover More



Breathe Interactive Artmaking and Peacebuilding

Community Arts Partnership (CAP) facilitators Carole Kane and Charmaine McMeekin led a fascinating Expressive arts workshop as part of the Belfast International Arts Festival 2023. The workshop was entitled, Breathe: Interactive Artmaking and Peacebuilding.

The Community Relations Council supported the project through its CR/CD Small Grants Scheme.

The workshop took place on 1 November 2023 with attendees and participants from Forthspring Inter-community Group.

The EXA workshop was delivered in support of peacebuilding and conflict transformation through creativity, discovery and playfulness and builds on a project that is currently taking place, called Breathe.

Participants in the room were honoured to have been joined by international peacebuilder Professor John Paul Lederach who read and discussed aspects of his writing in relation to the ongoing project. They were also joined online by others from across Europe and North America.

This event was supported by Community Relations Council Small Grants scheme. The workshops are continuing and are supported by Belfast City Council. Arts Council of Northern Ireland is also an appreciated funder to CAP.

Discover More



T:buc Headline Actions Updates

T:buc Camps Programme



Programme Summary

The T:buc Camps Programme provides opportunities for young people to come together to build positive relationships across divided parts of our community. The camps challenge historic positions, encourage debate and discussion and provide a way for young people to get to know each other, try new experiences, have fun and help to build longer term relationships. Camps are delivered on a cross- community basis.



Discover More

For more information on the T:BUC Camps programme, please see the QR link below:



Programme News

T:BUC Camps - Digital Creators Camp

Donna Hull from the Camps team in TEO joined Lauren Smythe from the Department of Education (DE) to visit Finaghy Youth Resource Centre, where young people were attending a T:BUC Camps workshop.

The T:BUC Camps Programme is one of the seven headline actions of the Executive's wider Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Strategy.

The Education Authority (EA) act as Programme Administrator for the T:BUC Camps Programme on behalf of TEO.

This particular Camp brought together 20 young people who attend two local youth groups in the Dunmurry area under the banner of 'CADI South & West Belfast - Digital Creators Camp'. The majority of the group were 11-13 years old and their four mentors were aged 16-17. The mentors have all recently completed the CADI Level 3 OCN training programme that took place in autumn 2023.

Following an icebreaker activity, the participants took part in a good relations exercise designed to get them thinking about their ideas on politics and sectarianism. Young people were encouraged to share their points of view on some quite thought provoking and emotive topics. It was impressive how articulate and respectful the young people were when discussing their opinions. The leader Andy ensured that it was a comfortable and inclusive environment for all participants.

Donna noted:

"The workshop took place the week before their residential, so there was a lot of excitement in the air. The project leader, Andy, has years of experience in youth work. He explained the importance of bringing the young people out of their local areas and to a mutual space. The workshop really captured what we are looking to achieve in the wider T:BUC Camps Programme - bringing young people from all backgrounds together to learn from each other and make friends."

Lauren gave her thoughts on the activities:

"The vibrancy and energy displayed by the young people, along with their leader and mentors, was inspiring. A highlight was the interactive good relations exercises which encouraged the young people to consider their attitudes to cultural questions posed and explore their values."



Planned Interventions Programme

Programme summary

Delivered annually as part of the Executive's wider "Together: Building a United Community (T:buc) Strategy", the Executive Office's Planned Interventions Programme provides funding for community activity to divert young people from anti-social and potentially criminal behaviour around contentious parades and public assemblies, and to deal with heightened tension around interfaces during the summer period. The Planned Interventions Programme is administered by the Education Authority.



Programme News

Fitness First for R-CITY's Young Women

Donna Hull from DCI Branch visited a cross community group of young women reaching across an interface to build new friendships and explore healthy living. This Planned Interventions project was funded by The Executive Office as part of the wider Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Strategy.

The Planned Interventions Programme (PIP) provides funding for community activity to:

- Divert young people from anti-social and potentially criminal behaviour.
- Address heightened inter and intra community tension around interfaces.

It aims to engage the 'most at risk' young people between the ages of 10 to 25 years in positive experiences and opportunities.

R-CITY's 'Young Women's Summer Interface Health Project' focused on the health and wellbeing of their young people living in an interface area. Donna met with a group

of 8 young women on a sunny August afternoon who had just returned from a long walk. They were in the process of making a well-deserved healthy alternative lunch of fruit and pizza bagels. The music was turned off and the young people, along with the leaders Megan and Shonagh, reflected on the PIP project and the impact it had on all of them.

The group, which included young people from both communities, met twice a week for a project which heavily promoted personal wellbeing.

They explained that they would attend a gym across an interface area and a personal trainer provided advice and guidance on how to use the equipment. The R-CITY leaders would ensure that the participants all came back to their hub in the Spectrum Centre, Shankill Road for a healthy bite to eat. Food security is important as not all young people have access to healthy meals at home during the school break. The focus on health and fitness helps to develop lifelong skills and habits, empowering the young people to make positive choices in their lives.

The young people explained that over the course of the programme they had built

trust and were able to discuss their different backgrounds. One of the participants said that before the programme started, she might not have travelled into certain areas but now it was "normal" and she felt "safe" as it was now an everyday thing. The leaders discussed how the young women had friends across the interface and were now planning joint 18th birthday parties. They noted how they were lucky to be involved in this project as the group was oversubscribed.

The participants had the following comments to share:

"The fitness programme has made me more confident in myself and my body image. I really enjoyed the training and working with the group over the summer meeting new friends." – young participant.

"The fitness programme helped me make friends from different communities who share the same interests and hobbies with me, we now are able to go out walking together outside of the group to keep fit and stay friends."

"If this programme didn't run over the summer, I would feel isolated and probably be waking up at 4pm because there would be nothing to do"

– young participant.



Planned Interventions

In 2023/24, there are

70 groups

delivering Planned Interventions Programmes within their communities, administered by the Education Authority.

"Projects like this help build life skills and raise the self-esteem of the young people involved. It is great to see the friendships which the participants from different backgrounds have made through encouraging each other to be healthier. These projects are also critical to improving community relations in areas where there is potential for heightened community tensions.

The positive impact that the Programme has had on this group of young women is invaluable. I would like to acknowledge the hard work of their youth leaders in continually encouraging and supporting these young women to make positive life choices."

Donna Hull

Discover More

For further information on the Programme, please email

plannedinterventions@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

or visit the website at



Urban Villages Initiative - Building our safe and connected community

Programme summary

The Urban Villages Initiative is designed to support communities and to work collaboratively across government departments, councils, and other interested parties to achieve positive outcomes for each Urban Village area through a series of capital investment and community-led projects.



Programme News

Urban Villages 'Cooking On A Budget' Programme success with Cathedral YC

Eight local 'head of families' were delighted to complete a 'Cooking on a Budget' programme at the Cathedral Youth Club on Monday last and also collected a new air fryer to help get them started in their new cooking journey.

'Know It Change It Live it' Programme (KCL Programme), the cooking on a budget programme consisted of 4 sessions over 4 weeks and each programme saw local community working together in all aspects of nutritious cooking.

Speaking at the final evening on Monday, Jayne Quigg, Dove House said it was great to get the course out into the community.

'I'm delighted to see this being such a successful course for local women in helping them to cook nutritious meals that can feed their whole family, and on a budget.'

Each week of the course had its own theme and delivered information on wholesome nutritious cooking ideas that help low-income families remain within a budget but still be able to feed everyone in the home.

Also taking part, Lyndsey Patterson said it increased her confidence in cooking.

'Taking part in the course here at the Cathedral Youth Club encouraged me to try new recipes and gain more experience with various foods. I look forward to trying out a lot more in the coming months.'

The course is planned to take place at various venues throughout the DLD UV area in the coming weeks. Contact Dove House Development Trust for further details on location and availability.



Community Cup at the newly redeveloped Marrowbone Millennium Park

The first cross community football tournament has been held at the newly redeveloped Marrowbone Millennium Park in North Belfast. Teams came from Linfield, Glentoran, Woodvale, 22nd old Boys and Ladies, Cliftonville and even Shamrock Rovers from Dublin, and great morning of football and fun was enjoyed by all.

"It was amazing to see over 100 young people from both the main NI communities and also guests all the way from Dublin, coming together to celebrate this amazing Shared Space. Urban Villages has created a facility that will go a long way to addressing so many health inequalities in North Belfast through programmes like this, education programmes and programmes that bring and welcome a range of diverse communities to Ardoyne."

Urban Villages contributed nearly £3million to complete the new facility and was officially opened on 27th October 2023 by Gareth Johnston (TEO), Cllr Ryan Murphy (Lord Mayor) and Patrick Anderson (DfC)

Joe Donnelly project coordinator from TAMHI commented

Urban Villages Ardoyne and Ballysillan Coordinator Joe Hinds said "It is fantastic to see this superb new facility being used as a significant shared space by so many local, neighbouring and visiting clubs and teams, we hope this will be the first of many events and activities."



Discover More

If you have any questions please contact:

info@urbanvillagesni.org

If you want to know more about these projects, check out the website:



Programme summary

Shared Education Campuses

The Shared Education Campuses (SEC) Programme provides capital assistance to applicant schools to facilitate shared education. There have been three calls to the SEC Programme, with five projects having been approved to proceed to planning. The projects include a mixture of designs, but all include shared education facilities as the core element of delivery.

Good Relations Awards

Winner summaries

For 2024 the Community Relations Council and The Executive Office were again delighted to bring you an expanded Awards programme.

Collaborating with partners in NICVA, NI Youth Forum, Volunteer Now and The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, the Awards showcased

Good Relations and Peace Building excellence across five categories.

This year the Awards attracted 75 entries, focusing on good relations in peace building and community cohesion. The Awards recognise the individuals who unite and champion our local communities, and the projects that connect us and drive our communities forward in peace, understanding and cultural respect.

On behalf of all the award partners, we would like to thank everyone who took the time to submit an entry. Thank you for being committed to improving community relations and the lives of citizens across our communities.

Exceptional Achievement Award

Level	Exceptional Achievement Winner	Summary
Winner	Elizabeth (Betty) Carlisle	<p>Working within the community sector for over 37 years, Betty Carlisle has established professional relationships with political figures, government, and other community organisations, including chairing the Greater Shankill Partnership and being a member of the Women's Support Network and of the Clonard-Mid Shankill Initiative Partnership. Betty firmly believes that building connections between various communities in NI and ROI is essential to fostering a sense of shared purpose, breaking down barriers, and promoting community unity.</p> <p>Betty has been the CEO of Shankill Women's Centre for the past 23 years, and her passion and drive for community work have resulted in its continued development and growing success. In Spring 2011 Betty was awarded an MBE for Services to Women.</p> <p>Betty has also been instrumental in developing two Social Economy Businesses; Small Wonders I & II, to support the growing childcare need in the area. Betty achieved a long-sought goal to accomplish a purpose-built shared space for women, with the new Shankill Shared Women's Centre opening in Spring 2024, supported by Peace IV/SEUPB.</p>

Level	Exceptional Achievement Recognition	Summary
Recognition	Harry Maher	<p>Harry Maher has driven cross community work across Northern Ireland with drive, equity, innovation and determination for 25 years. From early days in the 1990's as we emerged from conflict into the peace process Harry has worked tirelessly to develop and deliver programmes which would foster good relations, not only across 'traditional' communities but as Northern Ireland has changed, through extensive work with minority communities. From a DfC Community Development Officer in Belfast to leading interventions in the Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group, Harry has built a reputation based on knowledge, skill and an ability to forge sustainable relationships that can make a difference across communities.</p> <p>This work is most apparent in the huge success which is the Housing for All Programme which currently supports 69 shared schemes as a catalyst to support the delivery of the shared housing and good relations across NI. There are now 1973 shared homes with 1223 social housing applicants living in a shared environment. None of this would have been possible without the commitment, skill and energy of Harry. His legacy is in place for years to come.</p>
Recognition	Joe McKeown	<p>Joe McKeown has committed his entire adult life to engaging people of all faiths and none to conversations and relationships on peacebuilding and reconciliation.</p>

Community Champion Award

Level	Community Champion Winner	Summary
Winner	David Patterson	<p>David Patterson was a headmaster in Lowwood Primary School in North Belfast but has since taken early retirement as a carer. He has used his skills, knowledge and abilities to develop The Celebrating Difference Together TREK initiative and has involved schools with their communities through participation on the community-focused educational programme to explore, in a fun and engaging way, how all families and communities are different.</p> <p>Children and parents have been encouraged to see 'difference' as a good thing and embrace the shared values of Truth, Respect, Empathy and Kindness, which are the TREK values. Parents and community representatives are invited into school throughout the programme and materials are used in a fun and engaging way to explore the issue of personal, family, and community identity and promote good relations throughout.</p> <p>David has been the mastermind behind this resource and has worked tirelessly to develop Key Stage 1, 2 & 3 resources as well as an app for older children to use. He engages children, young people, and adults in the innovative initiative and suite of resources he has developed to create opportunities to understand difference, promote truth, respect, empathy, kindness and improve school, family and community relations in NI.</p>

Level	Community Champion Recognition	Summary
Recognition	Ioana Stoica	<p>Ioana Stoica was nominated for this recognition based on her outstanding voluntary contributions to the community. She has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to good relations work, fostering mutual respect, and celebrating diversity in Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council. Her role within the community is extensive, from providing support and translation services for the Romanian-speaking community to organising information sessions, cultural gatherings, and educational events that bring people together. Her work has made a positive impact by promoting mutual respect and understanding, strengthening diversity, and enhancing the celebration and embracing different cultures. Ioana has also played a pivotal role in changing community attitudes by challenging stereotypes, advocating for inclusivity, and contributing to peacebuilding efforts. She was nominated as a Community Champion for her tireless dedication to creating a more inclusive and harmonious community. She is not paid for any of her work and it is felt rare nowadays to find people like her doing so much positive work, so selfless, empathetic, generous and free.</p>
Recognition	Margaret Cunningham	<p>Margaret Cunningham has dedicated three decades of her life to helping others, promoting understanding, celebrating difference and breaking down barriers in the local community. Margaret leads by example, showing knowledge, compassion, and empathy for each person she meets, going above and beyond to make life better for all.</p> <p>Margaret's unfailing energy, enthusiasm and commitment continue to set a standard that other members of the community can aspire to. She is passionate about the work she does and the important messages she promotes, in delivering good relations and diversity programmes. She promotes and values difference and this is evidenced in the wide range and variety of programmes that she designs and delivers.</p> <p>Margaret was a winner in 2018 Education & Learning - Urban Villages, Community Awards, and Women of the Year 2016 - Derry City & Strabane District Council for Health & Education, evidence of the dedication and commitment Margaret shows to building relationships and promoting diversity through her work in health/ education.</p>

Connecting Communities Award

Level	Connecting Communities Winner	Summary
Winner	Waterside Shared Village	<p>The Waterside Shared Village project has brought the two interface communities of Top of the Hill and Irish Street together.. The project has resulted in the development of an iconic shared space which includes a shared community hub.</p> <p>Since opening in September 2022 Waterside Shared Village Ltd in partnership with Derry City and Strabane District Council have delivered cross-community programmes to 14,508 people from across the Irish Street/Top of the Hill interface and wider Waterside. They have delivered programmes that help participants to deal with the past and look to the future and re-imagining programmes for both communities. Programmes have included shared education, sport, health and well-being, youth, cultural, and primary and secondary after school provision.</p> <p>The project has required participants to move across the interface in order to use community venues, spaces and services which are not located in their own area. Through facilitating, encouraging and promoting movement between areas, the project has created a more cohesive society through the changing of attitudes and behaviour, the reduction in segregation and an increase in mutual respect for cultural difference.</p>

Level	Connecting Communities Recognition	Summary
Recognition	Naíscoil na Seolta	<p>The name, Naíscoil na Seolta, means nursery school of the sails. This reflects their connection to the shipbuilding heritage in east Belfast, while also representing their children sailing off on their educational journey. The nursery school is the first Integrated Irish-medium education provider in Northern Ireland and is a unique and ground-breaking project which is changing attitudes and breaking down barriers. As is outlined in the Good Friday Agreement; the Naíscoil is a space to “cherish and promote the cultural expression of our children and their families and increase mutual respect and understanding”.</p> <p>Naíscoil na Seolta is in the third year of its operation as an Integrated Irish-medium pre-school in east Belfast. They tackle the misconceptions and traditional divides surrounding Irish language, equipping the next generation to build a brighter future for east Belfast.</p>
Recognition	Martina Byrne, Andy Peters, Catherine Cummings	<p>The three volunteers nominated (Martina Byrne, Andy Peters, Cathryne Cummings) have come together to create a rural connections focused project that breaks down barriers and builds relationship between local people from all ages and all backgrounds in their local area. From parent and toddlers’ programmes and cross-community schools projects, connecting children from different community backgrounds to a seniors project and Conversation Cafe which brings together local people of all ages as well as those new to the community they have broke down barriers across age, religion, culture and ethnicity.</p> <p>Since the start of this project in September 2023 the three volunteers have worked tirelessly to engage all members of their community in this project, which to date has involved over 300 participants from the rural communities of Rathfriland and Hilltown as well as surrounding rural areas. The project has seen a level of cross-community engagement previously unseen in the local area and has opened up a range a safe shared spaces for people from all backgrounds. The project is a true celebration of diversity, music, culture and connectedness, with plans to continue cross-community/cross-culture engagement beyond the project’s funding cycle.</p>

Volunteer of the Year Award

Level	Volunteer of the Year Winner	Summary
Winner	Yvonne Heaney	<p>Yvonne has committed 25 years of her life to supporting cross-community work and projects, for young people and adults. She has also guided and inspired young people from partner countries during international youth exchanges.</p> <p>Yvonne has actively assisted with the planning and delivery of cross-community residential and projects for youth programmes and has similarly assisted with planning and delivery of shared education programmes in schools. Since becoming a Group Leader in 2000, Yvonne has assisted or supervised young people on cross-community residential and activities, international youth exchanges, shared education programmes and weekly club nights. During her 23 year Leadership & Committee role with REACH Across, Yvonne has enabled hundreds of cross-community friendships and has helped to instill an integrative and inclusive mindset into hundreds of young people in a vulnerable and influential age group (14 - 17yes)</p> <p>She has been a dedicated and wholehearted supporter of the cross-community work and programmes of REACH Across, as a Member, Leader and Committee Member. She has been a role model to Members and peers because of her genuine and active belief in integrated education, cross-community youth work and a shared future</p>

Level	Volunteer of the Year Recognition	Summary
Recognition	Helen Dunn	<p>Helen has been instrumental to developing networks and making connections to provide meaningful support for newcomers.</p> <p>She volunteers with Glenabbey Church and Welcome Churches where she provides an opportunity for newcomers from diverse backgrounds to come together to practice their English and meet others in a welcoming environment, creating a much-needed social space for many who are very isolated.</p> <p>Helen continues to share her expertise voluntarily to signpost newcomers and those organisations supporting newcomers to meaningful opportunities, developing her learning and knowledge by attending specific training and events and accessing resources so she can equip herself to support newcomers in the best way she can. Through this learning Helen is developing capacity within organisations she volunteers to help support others and develop their knowledge, widening support and promoting integration.</p> <p>Helen provides hands on support to many newcomer families through practical orientation, referring to appropriate organisations and being a friend to those in very challenging circumstances.</p>
Recognition	James Reynolds	<p>James Reynolds at the age of 18 has, within the past year, earned his Cooperation Ireland Future Leaders Silver Award, and begun working towards Gold. James is now working on a social action project, making a short film to raise awareness of the stigma around mental health. He was part of Forever Friends International (FFI) community building programme, growing his leadership and community building skills and has been elected onto the Northern Ireland Youth Forum's executive committee where he is both working with their mental health steering group "elephant coming out of the dark" and is helping with their social action projects to raise people spirits at Christmas and let them know they are not alone.</p> <p>Volunteering has been his top priority and he's put it above all else.</p>

Youth Award (Under 25)

Level	Youth Award (Under 25)	Summary
Winner	Crosslink Volunteer Team Youth Initiative	<p>The Crosslinks volunteer team, composed of individuals aged 16-19, serves as a highly commendable example of teenagers actively making a positive impact on both their immediate and broader communities. Through their leadership and actions, they establish a culture characterised by inclusivity, mutual understanding, the celebration of diversity, and the promotion of culture through peer-driven education. They actively foster friendships that bridge community divisions and provide a platform for the voices of our youth to be heard and valued.</p> <p>They are an example to society of what can happen when young people from different backgrounds come together, to listen & work together, to provide spaces to explore difference, appreciate it, then rejoice in it, while holding onto what makes them unique. The dynamic diversity witnessed in the weekly programmes that then is displayed in a final yearly show is inspiring and exciting as an example of creating a culture of inclusion, safety, mutual understanding and diversity. The friendships built through the arts across the various divides provide a voice now & for future generations to follow. These friendships themselves often last a lifetime!</p>

Level	Youth Award (Under 25) Recognition	Summary
Recognition	Empowering Young Women's Project	<p>The Empowering Young Women's project aims to support young women aged 15 - 25 living across North and West Belfast. As a young women's programme, EYW believes in fostering peace, equality, and mutual respect among the individuals in our projects and all communities. EYW is dedicated to building and nurturing positive relationships between women from diverse backgrounds, experiences, religions, and cultures.</p> <p>The project arose to empower young women to make better-informed choices in their futures and help them work towards their goals of further education, employment, and becoming more involved in their communities.</p> <p>The informal, safe, and welcoming environment allows young women to learn about topics that are often missed in school environments, such as periods, safe sex, pregnancy, and tackling anti-social behaviour. It also allows them to build trusted relationships with others from all communities and encourage mutual respect and understanding in our diverse society.</p> <p>This project is run by the Shankill Women's Centre and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.</p>



Level	Youth Award (Under 25) Recognition	Summary
Recognition	Nadia Boudhaim Maguire	<p>Nadia is an outstanding advocate for Good Relations and is very successfully engaged in a series of programmes promoting and celebrating diversity including initiatives: - fostering & celebrating cross-community cooperation, educational equity, promoting women's safety & celebrating International Women's Day. Nadia is a school student and has juggled her academic studies with her diverse volunteering work. Nadia has taken on active leadership roles, implementing practical actions that benefit the a diverse range of citizens.</p> <p>She is very successfully engaged in a series of programmes promoting and celebrating diversity;</p> <p>Since 2022 Nadia has been an Ambassador in the EmpowHer programme, and a Youth Committee leader with the Active Communities Network. Nadia was a participant in the Albert Schweitzer Leadership for Life Conference (July 2022). The Conference brought together young people of different race, ethnicity and religions, encouraging them to learn about each other's cultures. Since June 2023 Nadia has been a member of the GOLF (Generating Opportunities, Learning Futures) volunteer team. Nadia is not simply a participant but has taken on strong leadership roles in these Good Relations programmes e.g. she was the primary spokesperson in the campaign for the peace gates in West Belfast to be opened for longer hours.</p>

Good Relations Awards - Community Arts Partnership



community arts partnership

This year's additional awards were created in partnership with the Community Arts Partnership (CAP). Community Art is the process of harnessing the transformative power of original artistic expression and producing a range of outcomes: artistic, social, cultural and environmental.

If you would like to read haiku inspired by the values of the Good Relations Awards, please scan the QR code.



CAP is the lead agency for the promotion, development and delivery of community arts in Northern Ireland. Working with CAP, we created the awards for four of the 2024 Good Relations Awards categories. The sustainable awards are made from recycled glass and wood.

Further information: if you want to know more about the Good Relations Awards, please scan the QR code to visit the website.



CAP also invited local writers to reflect on the values of Good Relations for the Good Relations Awards 2024.

The values we invited writers to reflect upon through haiku included the overall theme of Good Relations & Together: 'Building a United Community' (T:BUC) "Changing for the better, together".

If you would like to read haiku inspired by the values of the Good Relations Awards, please scan the QR code.



Shared Housing Programme

Programme summary

The aim of the Shared Housing Programme is to create communities of 'good neighbours' and ensure that there is greater choice open to those who wish to live in a mixed area.

Each Scheme is supported by an Advisory Group made up of local Community and Voluntary Groups, local political reps and Good Relations Officers from the Housing Executive and local Councils. The Groups also include representatives from Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and other relevant statutory bodies.

Programme News

Each Shared Housing scheme is supported by an Advisory Group made up of local Community and Voluntary Groups, local political reps and Good Relations Officers from the Housing Executive and local Councils. The Groups also include representatives from Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and other relevant statutory bodies.

The Advisory Groups are key to informing the development of the shared schemes' five-year Good Relations Plans which include 'bonding' programmes to support the new incoming residents, and 'bridging' programmes to promote mixing between the new residents and residents from surrounding communities.

The initial 10 T:buc schemes have been the catalyst for additional shared housing which is now included in the Programme for Government – badged 'Housing for All'. Currently, there are 76 shared housing schemes being delivered across NI, and approx. 18% of the Programme is being delivered in a rural context.

Discover More

Links to Shared Housing Good Relations Videos:



Video Link:
[NI Housing Association Movement – Shared Housing Overview Video:](#)



Video Link:
[Apex Housing Association – The Growth of 'Housing for All':](#)



79

shared housing schemes totalling 2501 shared homes delivered / in development.

31

Advisory Groups have been established – 16 of the 31 Groups have merged, supporting several shared schemes, and creating linkages across The Good Relations Plans.

41

schemes (1,223 homes) have completed.

£190.7m

has been invested in the Shared Housing Programme; £33.5m in the T:buc Headline Action, and £157.2M in the Programme for Government's 'Housing for All' Commitment.

35

schemes (1,278 homes) are under construction or awaiting allocations.

£27.2m

has been invested in Good Relations Programmes.

£163.5m

has been invested in Good Relations Programmes.

Alderman Ross said:

"I have very much enjoyed meeting everyone here today and it was a great honour to officially open this new development at Glenwherry. It's wonderful to see how everyone is settling in and I wish them all the best for the future."

Carol McTaggart, Group Chief Executive of Clanmil Housing added:

"I am delighted to celebrate the official opening of these new homes. Shared neighbourhoods such as this offer people the choice to live alongside people from many backgrounds and traditions, and Clanmil is committed to delivering modern, quality homes that are welcoming to all."

The Department for Communities Permanent Secretary, Colum Boyle, officiated the 'sod-cutting' at Choice Housing's new shared development at Fountain Hill in Antrim. The new development will deliver approximately 38 new homes, with 16 delivered in the first phase.

Choice Group Chief Executive Michael McDonnell said,

"As a housing association, Choice continues to show real leadership

Spring launch of Three New Shared Housing Developments.

April and May saw the launch of three new shared housing developments; Glenwherry Court, Newtownabbey, Fountain Hill, Antrim, and Belfast Road, Newry.

Clanmil Housing Association's Glenwherry Court shared housing development was officially opened by the Mayor of Antrim and Newtownabbey, Alderman Stephen Ross. Allocations to the new homes in Glenwherry enabled Clanmil to work in partnership with the NI Health and Social Care Trust to provide homes for young people leaving care.



in shared housing. Choice is determined to create and sustain diverse, integrated and ultimately more stable and thriving neighbourhoods, grounded in mutual respect."

Colum Boyle, Permanent Secretary at the Department for Communities, added, "The Shared Housing Programme aims to improve choice and remove barriers to accessing quality homes across the region. This new development in Antrim makes an important contribution to this and we are pleased to be partnering with Choice on this project."

Arbour Housing launched its first shared neighbourhood at Belfast Road in Newry. The launch was supported by Councillor Michael Savage, chairperson of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Kieran Matthews, CEO of Arbour Housing said, "The developer and contractor have produced a lovely apartment block and the feedback from our tenants on both the accommodation and service provision has been very positive. As this is a shared housing scheme, all tenants will benefit from good relations projects and events that will support them in settling into their new home and surroundings."



Sport changing lives across communities for children and young people.



Children & Young People from across North and West Belfast came together to participate in a cross community, good relations themed project using sport as a medium to enhance personal development & health & wellbeing. The sessions fostered cross community relationships involving honesty, trust, respect and open communication whilst promoting and raising awareness on the themes of diversity, cultural understanding and difference. This project was delivered as a partnership project between Radius, Clannmil and Apex Housing and was facilitated by Sport Changes Life.

Over 200 primary 7 school children participated in a 10-week Honour Roll Programme across North & West Belfast including Our Lady Queen of Peace, St Paul's, Edenbrook, Malvern and Forth River Primary Schools and finished with a celebration event held in the Hammer Youth Club where children received a certificate.

Alongside the delivery of this Sport Changes Life facilitated a 12-week E-Hoops Programme with twenty 6th year students from Malone Integrated College & Belfast Boys Model and a further 20 young people in further education with Impact & Workforce Training. The 40 students successfully completed an OCN Level 1 in Prejudice and Discrimination. The young people came together to receive their accreditations and certificates were presented at celebration events in both Corrs Corner Hotel and the Devenish Complex.

Alan Teggart, CEO, Sport Changes Life said 'I am immensely proud of this impactful collaboration between Radius, Apex and Clannmil Housing Associations and Sport Changes Life in the delivery of the North/West Belfast Good Relations Project. Engaging over 240 young people in a project that harnesses the power of sport to foster good relations, personal development, and well-being is reflective of our mission of raising aspirations through sport. This initiative not only exemplifies the transformative potential of sport but also underscores the importance of unity, understanding, and community in shaping a brighter future for our youth.'

The North & West Good Relations Project is supported by the

Department for Communities and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's 'Housing for All' Shared Housing Programme. The Programme has its origins in the NI Executive Together: Building a United Community Strategy which reflects the Executive's commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society. Radius, Clannmil and Apex currently has 34 shared housing developments across Northern Ireland with a total investment of over £12 million for Belfast, each of which has a Good Relations Plan.

Speaking at the celebration events, Sharon Traynor from Radius Housing said "The North & West Belfast Good Relations Project was a wonderful programme that brought children and young people together from across-communities with the aim of contributing to a more inclusive, cohesive and integrated society. Through our shared housing programmes, Radius aims to build strong communities, and programmes like this, that play a really important role in ensuring that young people are central to a positive future in NI."

The Good Relations Plans includes 'Bridging' events which are delivered to the wider community in a 5-mile radius of each Shared

Housing Development, to encourage a range of good relations outcomes and include the themes of Arts & Culture, Health and Wellbeing and Education, Training & Employment.

Gordon Crozier, Good Relations Officer, Apex Housing highlighted that "Sport is an amazing way to bring people, especially young people, together and to create a basis to make real change. We were pleased to be able to support these workshops through the shared housing programme. The idea of bringing young people from different communities and cultures together under the banner of sport is one we emphatically support. Thanks to the schools and young people who took part and to Sports Changes Life for all their hard work in delivering the project."

Philip Whyte, Community Cohesion Officer for Clannmil Housing said "It's been fantastic to work with Sports Changes Life and other housing associations to support these young people in learning new skills, keeping active and having fun, while getting to know other children from different community backgrounds. This is one of a number of initiatives we've been actively involved with as part of our work to strengthen community relations in neighborhoods in and around our shared housing developments."



Discover More

Please contact Sharon Traynor, Radius Housing via email at Sharon.traynor@radiushousing.org

Brendan Scott
MW Advocate
07834422923
brendan.scott@mwadvocate.com

Carrickfergus women complete a six-week 'Exploring Our Identity' project.



A group of Carrickfergus women have been learning about the history of Northern Ireland and the peace process during a six-week course supported by Clanmil Housing.

The Exploring Our Identity project was funded by the Department for Communities and the NI Housing Executive as part of a Good Relations plan for the new 'Housing For All' shared housing development on Belfast Road, Carrickfergus.

The project was delivered over six-weeks, and it included workshops and visits to museums and historic sites in Derry/Londonderry, Newtownabbey and Belfast, and the group also attended a performance of a play about the life of Progressive Unionist Party founder David Ervine.

Janice Hill of the Carrickfergus Community Forum explained the origins of the group and why they wanted to take part in the project:

"The women's group meet here weekly to socialise, do crafts and crochet and generally support each other. As a diverse group of different ages and backgrounds, the idea of a cultural identity project was put forward by the women and thankfully Clanmil was able to support us in running it. Over the course of six weeks,

we visited a number of sites including the White House in Newtownabbey to view a film called The Quest for Dalaraia, and other sites and museums in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry and Limavady, as well as having some classroom-based workshops.

"The topics over the six weeks covered everything from the first settlers in Northern Ireland; the story of St Patrick's Day; the history of the Orange Order and the origins of the Irish tricolour, amongst others. We also heard first-hand about the Good Friday Agreement from one of those who had been involved in the talks. One of the highlights was a visit to at the Theatre At The Mill Newtownabbey, to see The Man Who Swallowed a Dictionary a play about the life of David Ervine.

"There has definitely been a trickle-down effect, whereby the women have shared their

knowledge with family members. They got so much out of the course, and they are very keen to learn about other cultures in Carrickfergus as the population becomes more diverse."

As well as taking part in the Exploring Our Identity project, the women continue to develop close and supportive bonds.

"It's amazing to think that the group started with just two women looking for some help after the COVID lockdown, and now has grown so much,"

Janice added

"To me, the group exemplifies 'good relations' as it's been about building relationships, camaraderie and support."

Austin Kelly, Community Cohesion Officer with Clanmil said:



Shared Housing Carrick group



"This is one of several cross-community projects Clanmil has supported as part of our Good Relations Plan for Carrickfergus, as we prepare to complete new homes at Belfast Road in the town. Not only has this project helped to reduce isolation, but it has also helped the participants learn more about their own culture and discover more about other cultures and the history of peacebuilding in Northern Ireland. We look forward to hearing how the women get on as they continue to learn about the increasingly diverse population of Carrickfergus."

One of those who took part was Andrea Ellis, who commented:

"When we were discussing ideas for a course to do I suggested learning about cultural identity because there are so many cultures coming to Northern Ireland that we're not aware of and we can't really learn about other cultures until we discover our own. I grew up in one culture and I know nothing about 'the other side' as they call it here, and it would be good to explore that, and that's how it came about."

"The Exploring Our Identity project has been an eye-opener, not only by learning from other women in the group and understanding what has formed their opinions, but also by discovering different museums and places in Belfast that I never knew existed."

The 'Housing for All' Shared Housing Programme has its origins in the NI Executive Together: Building a United Community Strategy which reflects the Executive's commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society.

Shared Housing Bursary Project Launched in Good Relations Week 2023



Apex, Clanmil, and Radius housing, in partnership with University of Ulster (UU), launched the Shared Housing Bursary Project as part of Good Relations week 2023. The bursaries have been awarded to people seeking to work in the field of community development either on a voluntary or paid basis.

A bursary agreement has been developed between the Housing Associations, the UU, and the new students, and it includes a requirement for the successful candidates to promote good relations outcomes in the course of their work while undertaking voluntary work with the Associations in the delivery of the shared housing Good Relations Plans.

The course can last up to four years and the candidates will have the option to exit the course at Year 1, Year 2 or Year 3 with a certified qualification,

or exit at Year 4 with a BSc (Hons) Community Development.

Apex is sponsoring five bursaries through its Culmore, Dungannon and Ballynaffoy Advisory Groups. Teresa McCloskey, Apex Community Investment Manager, said:

"We identified a skills gap in community development practice, specifically when recruiting staff with the skills to support the development and delivery of Good Relations Plans. We addressed this with the University of Ulster, and we have now created a partnership approach that will enable the successful students to volunteer in the delivery of the Plans while gaining accredited qualifications. Importantly, the project will provide a future supply of Good Relations Officers."

Radius Housing are sponsoring two bursaries through the Ballymena and Newry Advisory Groups. Grainne Mullin, Radius Community Investment Manager, said;

"This course provides an opportunity to those who have voluntary experience to develop into skilled practitioners. Radius is keen to ensure that we leave a legacy within our shared housing developments and this enabling partnership project highlights the strength of the 'Housing for All' Programme - to provide foundations for lasting change in communities across the region."

Clanmil are sponsoring four bursaries through the Embankment Advisory Group. Jennifer Cuthbert, Clanmil Community Investment Manager, said;

"We are absolutely delighted to be able to give four young people this life-changing experience to attain a Degree in Community Development. This opportunity will raise aspirations and help the students to develop long-term relationships with stakeholders across the sector which will open doors for future employment."

Discover More

Advisory Groups

Advisory Groups support the development and delivery of the shared schemes' Good Relations Plans, and they draw membership from elected representatives, local Council and Housing Executive Good Relations Officers, Third Sector organisations, and sports and church organisations (this list is not exhaustive).

Course Information:

The course is delivered over four years - one day per week (27 days per year attending UU). There is an exit point at each year as follows:

Year 1
Cert in Community Studies

Year 2
Cert HE in Community Development (professionally endorsed)

Year 3
Associate Bachelor Degree in Community Development (professionally endorsed)

Year 4
Bachelor of Science (Hons) degree in Community Development (professionally endorsed)

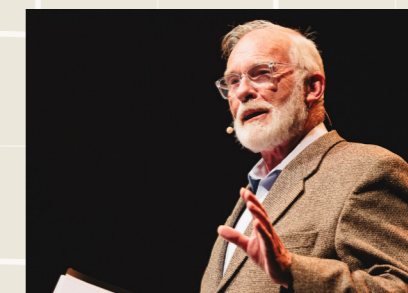
Northern Lights Shine at the Waterfront Hall

Saturday 16th September saw the 'curtain-raiser' to this year's Good Relations Week at the Waterfront Hall in Belfast. The Northern Lights Production was delivered as part of the Department for Communities and Housing Executive's Shared Housing Programme 'Housing for All', which has its origins in the NI Executive Together: Building a United Community Strategy.

The theme of this year's Good Relations week was 'Together', and the Northern Lights production brought together, for the first time, residents from each of the completed shared housing schemes across the region.

Northern Lights is produced by Peter Corry and it is narrated by Ian McElhinney (Granda Joe from Derry Girls). The production celebrates the diversity of our two main cultures through song, dance, and comedy, and the event was opened by Head of Civil Service Jayne Brady, who praised the ongoing good relations work that is delivered by the participating Housing Associations in partnership with communities across NI.

The show included a performance from the St Patrick's College and Drumglass High school Choir, which first came together for a Christmas event in 2021. Apex Housing and Radius Housing became aware that both schools had choirs and they asked if they could form a joint choir to deliver a carol service to the shared housing residents during Covid. The choir now includes children from 14 cultural backgrounds.

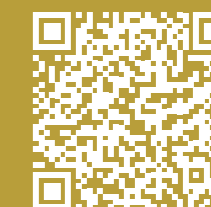


Ian McElhinney (Granda Joe from Derry Girls.)



Discover More

For more information about the Shared Housing Programme please visit:



Central Good Relations Fund

Programme summary

The Central Good Relations Fund (CGRF) supports constituted voluntary and community sector groups to deliver good relations projects where there is evidence of good relations need. Since 2016, £15million has been awarded to support over 460 projects. In the last three funding years alone over 100,000 direct participants have been positively impacted by programmes using activities like sport, music and crafts to engage local communities.

Programme News

Rural Housing Association's - Rural Communities Connect Project

Funded by the Central Good Relations Fund (CGRF) 2023/24, the Rural Housing Association (RHA) is delivering its 'Rural Communities Connect' project which has brought together two community groups located only three miles apart - Hilltown (majority CNR) and Rathfriland (majority PUL). Although close in proximity, these two groups would have had little opportunity to undertake cross-community projects together. The project builds relationships between locals of all ages from Rathfriland and Hilltown, through a project exploring shared heritage, history and music, as well as delivering a series of intergenerational projects challenging stereotypes and promoting diversity.

Many invisible barriers can exist within Rural Communities, with many communities preferring to keep themselves to themselves and avoiding

particular areas/community backgrounds. As a result, it can be difficult for groups to provide statistics and information as evidence that there is a Good Relations need, even though these areas may be in as much need of an intervention as urban areas.

Fun and worthwhile activities have been facilitated throughout the duration of the project which has allowed the two communities to spend time together and build positive and meaningful relationships.

It has been observed how the project has been having a huge benefit to both communities from an early stage, with friendships having been formed that previously did not exist.

The project is delivering against the T:BUC Priority 'Our Shared Community' and each week the project venue alternates between each of the areas. This has built up the confidence of participants to go to an area they previously would not have visited.

Within the project, activities have included:

The establishment of the Rathfriland/ Hilltown Advisory Group

A mentoring partnership with Sion Mills Community Forum

Immigration through Music Workshops/ Events

Rural Communities Connect Our Shared History

The conversation café & pop up cafes

Parent & toddler workshops

As part of the project, in building new links and traditions, Hilltown hosted the village's first Burn's Supper in January 2024 to celebrate the life and works of poet Robbie Burns in true Scottish style. As well as the traditional Scottish menu, the reciting of Robert Burns poems and songs, guests were entertained by a

piper, Scottish Country Dancers from the Schomberg Society, Kilkeel, and Scottish music played by local artists. The evening was a great success and enjoyed by the communities from both Rathfriland and Hilltown.

Within the GR Capacity Building element of the project, the smaller groups have been learning about budgeting and governance arrangements without being overwhelmed - like many community groups, the staff from these groups are voluntary and have other commitments.

In relation to the need for GR Capacity Building in rural areas, Project Manager, Ruth Buchanan, advised:

"There are many small community groups (mostly volunteer-led) doing great work and having a larger delivery partner is an excellent way for smaller capacity groups to receive the mentoring they require to build capacity.

In addition to the traditional barriers between PUL/CNR many rural communities also have many minority ethnic communities moving in to areas and therefore GR projects are vital to also learn about other community backgrounds and to assist with integration".

Community demand for this project exceeded initial expectation, with many more workshops and sessions needing to be arranged due to the uptake of communities wanting to be involved. All participants have enjoyed the opportunity to learn about each other and build positive relationships and friendships which will no doubt continue after the project ends.

District Council Good Relations Programme

Programme summary

The key aims of the District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP) are to improve relations between and within Council areas and to support local solutions to local good relations issues.

Programme News

Let's Connect Championships brings people 'Together'

A sporting tournament has brought teams from around the world together with local teams to champion inclusivity and build connections.

The Let's Connect Championship was recently hosted by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, with the support of the District Council Good Relations Programme, and in partnership with the Irish Football Association (IFA). The T:BUC Division participated in the 5-a-side football tournament which was held at the Valley Leisure Centre. The aim was to bring together teams representing various countries and cultures from across the world, to celebrate unity, diversity, camaraderie, and community through the spirit of sport.

The T:BUC Division were delighted to support the event which brought together teams representing various countries and cultures from across the world, to celebrate unity, diversity, camaraderie, and community through the spirit of sport.

Paul Douglas, District Council Good Relations and T:BUC Trees (and T:BUC team Captain), said:

"Initiatives like the Let's Connect Championship play a vital role in bringing communities together and complement the work done to create a peaceful, fair, equal and prosperous society for all. The Tournament results might not have gone the way we'd hoped but, overall, the event was a great success, and we were delighted to be involved. In fact, we're already in training for next year's Championship!"

Mayor of Antrim and Newtownabbey, Councillor Mark Cooper, said:

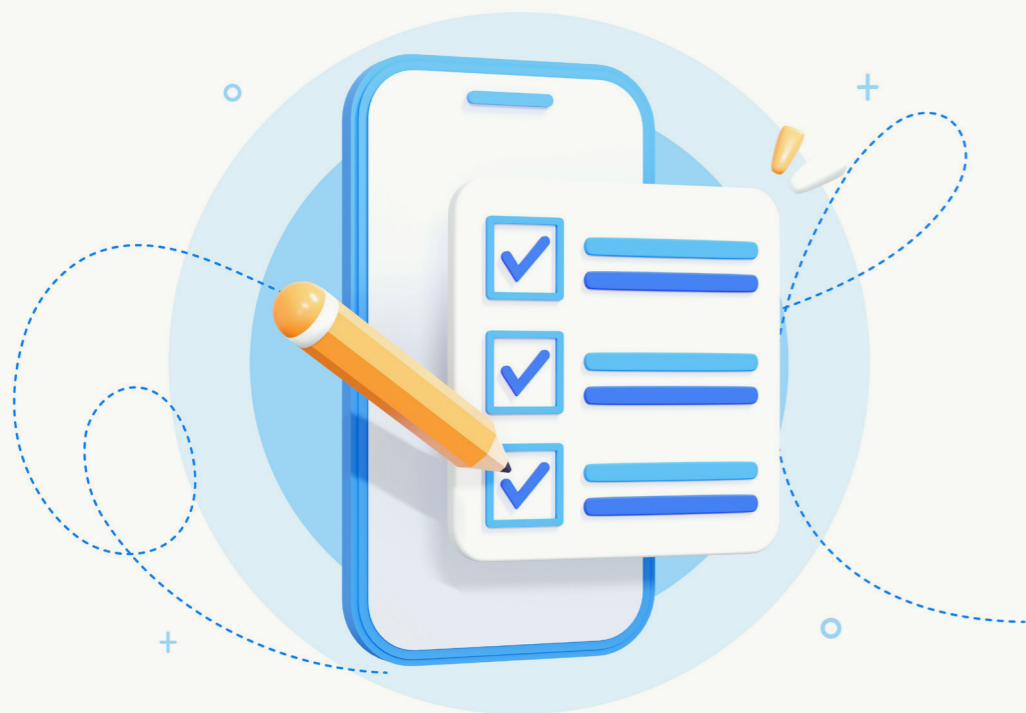
"Sports, like football, are powerful tools that bridge gaps and build lasting connections among communities worldwide. As Mayor, I am proud to witness the strength of our community and the commitment to fostering positive relations. "Let's continue to champion inclusivity, camaraderie, and understanding for a brighter future together."



Teams from around the world together

Discover More

If you have any questions please contact: District.CouncilGR@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk



The Community Relations Council, on behalf of The Executive Office invites you to share your experiences of the current staffing and volunteering position within the Good Relations sector. This piece of research is being carried out with a view towards ensuring the sector continues to have the necessary knowledge, participation and support for the future.

The QR Code below will take you to the survey



Your Role and the Future Delivery of the Good Relations Sector



People and Peace
March 2024

Discover More

Further information on the T:buc Strategy may be found at





People and Peace March 2024



Discover More

Further information on the T:buc
Strategy may be found at:

www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/tbuc

