

T:buc

Changing for the better, together



Celebrating
Good Practice
April 2025

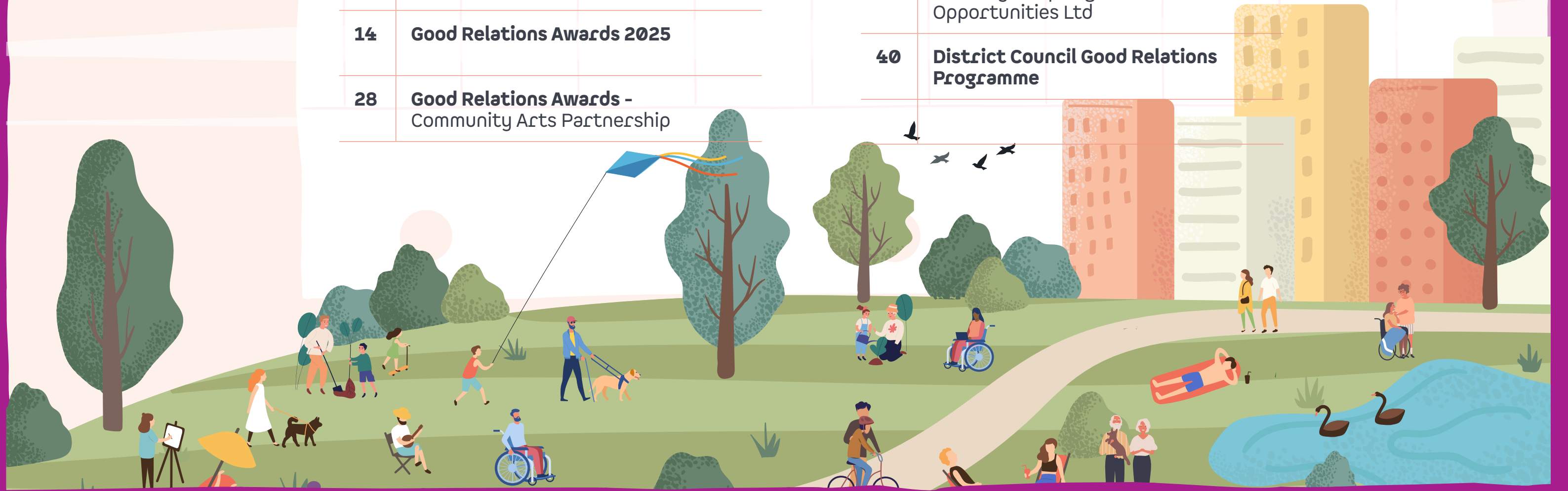


Northern Ireland
Executive

Contents

Celebrating
Good Practice
April 2025

4	Foreword	29	Community Poets
5	TEO News Stories TEO's Ebrington Square to host All Ireland Pipe Band Championships 2025	32	Urban Villages Initiative Building our safe and connected community
6	T:BUC Headline Actions Updates T:BUC Camps Programme	34	Shared Housing Programme
8	T:BUC Camps Programme Good Relations visit in Rasharkin	34	Open Botanic 2024
9	Planned Interventions Programme	36	Culture on the Hill: Celebrating Diversity and Culture in Dungannon
11	Mental Health focus of YEHA's Planned Interventions Programme	37	Cross community and cross border Ability Counts football tournament, Choice Housing Association
13	Planned Interventions bring children from segregated communities together	38	United Youth Programme
14	Good Relations Awards 2025	39	Journeys – Springboard Opportunities Ltd
28	Good Relations Awards - Community Arts Partnership	40	District Council Good Relations Programme



Foreword



I am delighted to welcome you to the first T:BUC Engagement Forum of 2025, held for the first time in the newly built facilities of the Shankill Shared Women's Centre.

Shankill Women's Centre has been at the centre of local community development since it opened over 30 years ago, providing education, training, childcare and broader activities for women within Greater Shankill and beyond. I am delighted that they have benefitted from being one of three PEACE IV shared space projects in Belfast, with investment of £7.79 million facilitating the development of this wonderful, purpose-built shared space.

The aim of the new building is to create a welcoming, safe and accessible shared space for women and their families from all communities. Its opening in June 2024 marked a new chapter for staff and users of the centre and I have no doubt that this will allow them to build on the already incredible impact they've made.

The accompanying T:BUC Engagement Forum Newsletter contains a selection of articles and stories which showcase the fantastic work that continues to be delivered through the T:BUC strategy and wider Good Relations Delivery. It is great to see that the dedication to the delivery of impactful cross-community activities is as strong as ever.

It is fitting that this edition of the Newsletter also features the Good Relations Awards 2025 which recognise the people and organisations who are transforming our communities. The Good Relations Awards is an important event in our calendar because it gives us all an opportunity to acknowledge those who are working hard to foster Good Relations across the province.

Last year, Betty Carlisle MBE from Shankill Shared Women's Centre was awarded the Community Relations Council's exceptional achievement award. Working within the community sector for over 37 years, Betty has established professional relationships with political figures, government, and other community organisations, so it's wonderful to be here to celebrate the 2025 edition of the awards.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Award Partners who work with us to increase the profile of the event and to encourage local groups, individuals, and organisations to get involved and submit nominations for the Good Relations Awards.

Co-ordinated by the Community Relations Council and The Executive Office, over 60 nominations were received in total, showcasing the increasing level of outstanding community relations, intercultural and peacebuilding work taking place across all our communities. Details of all the award winners can be found within this newsletter. I also want to acknowledge the real impact the work of all our nominees is having within our society, improving people's lives and their outlook for the future, while also strengthening the community spirit in the places and spaces where we live, work, and play. Turning to the Engagement Forum, today's theme is 'Celebrating Good Practice' and I'd like to thank the Community Relations Council for their work in developing today's programme. I look forward to hearing more from our awards winners to inform, inspire and engage all of us. This will be followed by table discussions where we can connect with each other to share ideas and 'good practice' in a collaborative setting.

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

TEO News Stories

TEO's Ebrington Square to host All Ireland Pipe Band Championships 2025



Ebrington Square in Derry - Londonderry is set to host the prestigious All Ireland Pipe Band Championships to in 2025.

The event, set to attract around 6,000 spectators, will provide a major boost for local businesses and tourism in the region, and is part of TEO's plans to develop a vibrant and inclusive year-round events programme for the site.

As the Ebrington team look forward to the 5 July 2025 event, Joan O'Hara, Director of Urban Villages and Infrastructure said: "The Championships are an opportunity to showcase Ebrington to a broader and more diverse audience, raising the profile of the site and demonstrating its potential to contribute to economic growth, cultural engagement and long term sustainability for the region. This event is just one a number of large and smaller scale and charity events taking place at Ebrington in 2025 and we will be announcing an enhanced Easter, summer and autumn programme early in in 2025 which will have something for everyone!"

Alastair Patterson, Chairman of the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association Northern Ireland Branch said:

"We are delighted to be bringing the All Ireland Pipe Band and Drum Majors Championships to Ebrington Square, Derry / Londonderry. I want to thank The Executive Office for getting involved and look forward to working closely with them, and also Derry City and Strabane District Council, and promise an excellent experience on the 5th July 2025 on the Square."



T:BUC Headline Actions Updates

T:BUC Camps Programme



Latest T:BUC Camps Programme outcomes indicate that:

93%

of participants plan to stay in contact with friends made at a camp after the project ends

83%

of participants feel more favourable towards people from a different religious/ community background.

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.

Programme News

The T:BUC Camps Programme is one of the seven headline actions of the wider T:BUC (Together: Building a United Community) Strategy.

The Programme is delivered in partnership with the Education Authority (EA) and the Department of Education (DE) with EA acting as Programme Administrator on behalf of the Executive Office (TEO). Good Relations learning

is at the heart of every T:BUC Camp. It provides opportunities for young people aged 9 - 25 from all backgrounds to come together, try new experiences, have fun, and build longer term relationships.

Since the programme began in 2015, 978 Camps have been delivered to approximately 33,650 young people with a total investment from TEO of over £12m. Delivery for 2024/25 is currently underway, 112 groups are delivering a Camp and the young participants are engaging in opportunities and experiences which will support them in their good relations learning and enable them to explore their own, and each other's, sense of identity.



Programme Summary 2023 - 2024

T:BUC Camps Programme is a headline action under the T:BUC Strategy. The Programme is delivered collaboratively with The Executive Office, Department of Education (DE) and the Education Authority (EA). Camps provide opportunities for young people aged 9-25 from cross- community backgrounds to come together and build lasting relationships based on a mutual respect and understanding, to try new experiences and to have fun! Good relations is at the heart of every Camp and the young people must deliver a social action project as part of their Camp.

More Information

2,792

young people participated in T:BUC Camps in 2023/24

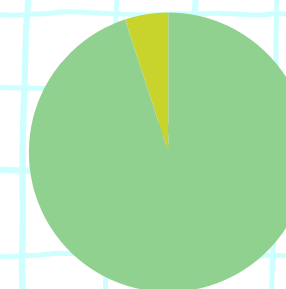
107

camps successfully completed

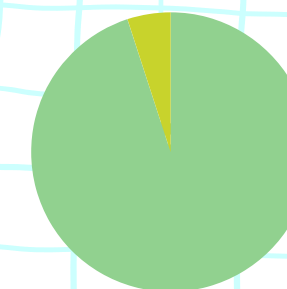


Scan me for more information

How well did we do?

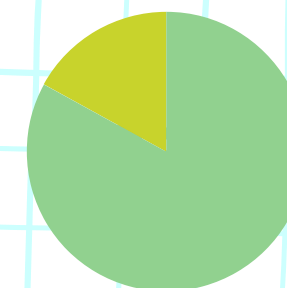


of the participants feel they gained a personal benefit from the experience (e.g. confidence, skills and participation)

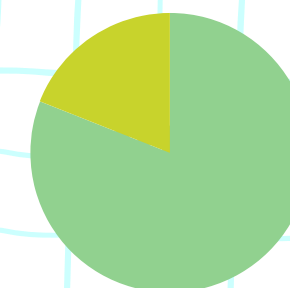


of participants feel they would like to be more involved in peace building activities in the future

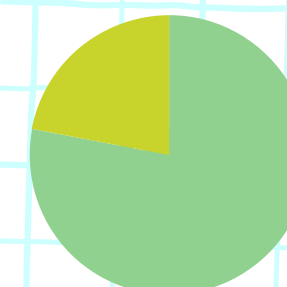
Is anyone better off?



of participants feel more favourable towards people from a different community background



of participants feel more favourable towards people from different ethnic backgrounds.



of participants think culture and traditions of different religious backgrounds add to the richness and diversity here

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ea Education Authority

Northern Ireland Executive

Department of Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk



T:BUC Camps Programme Good Relations visit in Rasharkin



This particular programme used sport as the vehicle to promote good relations. Sport helps the young people find common ground, build relationships and learn the importance of teamwork. We got to witness the young people play basketball practicing their skills working as a team – you could feel the energy and fun in the room! The young people were also learning about their identity and what makes them unique. They filled out 'My Players Cards' helping them understand what they bring to the team and a great opportunity to learn more about other people in their team.

The young people shared what they enjoyed most about the programme, 'making new friends', 'getting to do activities they haven't had the chance to before', 'learning a new sport' and 'having fun' were just some of the responses.

The Programme provides a fun, rewarding and beneficial experience for young people. The young people embark on an immersive experiential learning opportunity that can change the way they see themselves, their relationships with peers and other groups, and ultimately their future.

TEO visited a T:BUC Camps Programme in Rasharkin which saw a group of 50 young people aged between 10 – 11 years old come together from the two local schools, Rasharkin Primary School and St. Patrick's Primary School.

The leaders noted that while the two schools are within the local community a lot of the young people will likely have never met anyone from the other school before, which is why programmes like this are so important.

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

The Planned Interventions Programme (PIP) funds community activity to provide positive alternatives for young people at risk of becoming involved in anti-social and other negative behaviours. The Programme is delivered annually as part of the Executive's wider 'Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC)' Strategy. It is funded by The Executive Office and administered by the Education Authority.

PIP aims to engage the 'most at risk' young people between the ages of 10 to 25. Projects are tasked with operating at key times, when the likelihood of social unrest is high, or tensions between communities are heightened. PIP also seeks to develop the capacity of young people to meaningfully take part in structured cross community engagement and relationship building programmes, such as T:BUC Camps.

The latest available outcomes from the 2023/24 Programme indicate that 95% of participants feel that they are less likely to engage in negative behaviour.

TEO allocated £400k to the delivery of PIP for 2024/25 and DE allocated an additional £300k funding to PIP (for 2024/25 only) to enable funding of a total of 122 groups.

On an ongoing basis, TEO colleagues analyse distribution and seek to address any gaps in funding provision.

Discover More

If you would like to find out any more information about the T:BUC Camps Programme or any of our programmes, please scan right:



T:buc Planned Interventions

Programme Summary 2023 - 2024

The planned interventions programme funds community activity to provide positive alternatives for young people at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour, sectarianism and recruitment from paramilitary gangs, and to address heightened inter and intra-community tension around interfaces (including not only physical peace walls, but anywhere there is a potential for community tensions to arise).

68 Projects were delivered in 2023/24.

1459 Young people participated

Discover more



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Authority

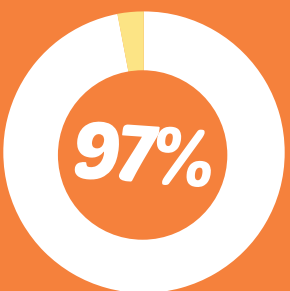
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Department of
Education
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How well did we do it?

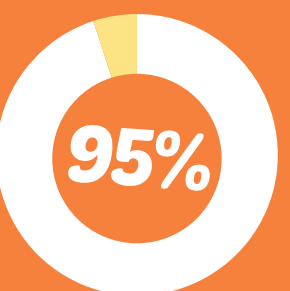


of participants felt they were well treated during the programme

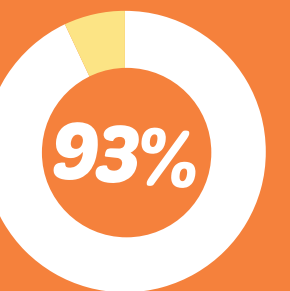


of young people completed the project

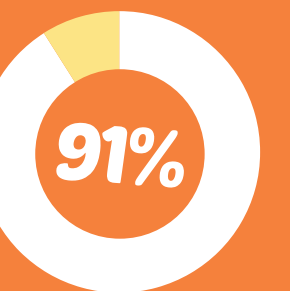
Is anyone better off?



of participants felt less likely to engage in negative behaviour



of participants felt their confidence has increased after taking part in the programme



of participants felt their skills increased

Mental Health focus of YEHA's Planned Interventions Programme

TEO and the Department of Education (DE) officials visited Youth Education Health and Advice (YEHA) to see first-hand the excellent work being funded through TEO's Planned Interventions Programme (PIP).

Niamh Murray placement student and Donna Hull went to meet with YEHA to observe their Planned Interventions Programme. On their arrival they were met by project leader Tommy who gave a tour of the YEHA centre, which facilitates a therapeutic environment with outdoor space. Tommy explained these spaces are critical in supporting how YEHA deliver their programs. YEHA has provided a safe space for young people in North Belfast since 2007. YEHA's PIP project worked on a schools-based support program which offered weekly one to one sessions for young people who required support with issues affecting their mental health and wellbeing.

This project involved 25 young people aged 12-18 who engaged in counselling, skills development, peer support groups, life coaching and mentoring at the relevant age-appropriate level. The group work included specialist autism spectrum disorder (ASD) programmes to support the needs of some of the young people participating.



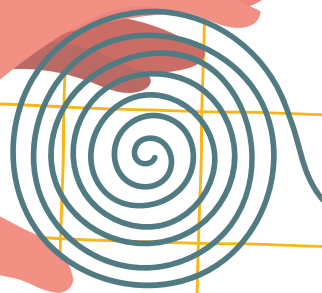
The group sessions had a strong mental health and well-being focus and the project included peer mentoring and educational workshops discussing topics such as:

- the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol,
- smoking/vapes,
- technology awareness,
- emotional and physical well-being, and
- safe relationships.

Everyone came together on Fridays to have barbeques or take part in fun activities which allowed for a community environment to be created.

The young people also delivered a social action project on the site of a local primary school which is becoming a Special Educational Needs (SEN) school. Some of the participants had a special connection to this project as they had previously attended that primary school and were keen to get involved in cleaning up and decorating the outdoor space.





Planned Interventions bring children from segregated communities together

TEO joined EA to visit Oxford United Stars FC's Planned Interventions project which saw young people from across the Derry City and Strabane District Council areas come together to play football together. This Planned Interventions project engaged young people aged 9-13 and was delivered on a cross-community basis.

Karen Monteith from Oxford United Stars FC commented that,

"This funding was invaluable in supporting the Club to bring together children from segregated communities across the Derry City and Strabane District Council area to learn together through sport, become happier and healthier and to enjoy making new friends."

We hope to build on this programme and to continue to utilise sport as a mechanism to bring young people together from diverse communities who would not otherwise have the opportunity to play and learn together. Oxford United Stars FC would like to thank the Executive Office through T:BUC funding for providing the funding which supported this project."

The young people now visit each other across town and play with each other online through the Xbox. This has also helped some of the participants from more rural areas feel social and is an opportunity to bring young people from different backgrounds together. Karen explained that one of the participants is organising a birthday party at the pitch to which all the team are invited.

One parent who was watching the practice said that she had noticed a big difference in her child since he started playing. Her child had behavioural issues in school and she commented;

"The teachers say that they notice from the TEO Planned Interventions a big difference in his behaviour if he has to skip practice one week. He is calmer when he plays, and it has really helped him socially."

Donna Hull from TEO said,

"It was fantastic to have the opportunity to visit the Planned Interventions project participants and watch young people with different backgrounds from across the city bond and get to know each other through sport. During my visit they were taking part in drills ahead of the upcoming Winter Cup Finals. I want to wish the team all the best."

Participants also had the opportunity to travel out of Belfast during a peak time of community tension to attend a residential trip to Ardaluin House, Newcastle.

The project delivered further benefits to the young people such as leadership skills development and improved confidence. YEHA delivery model allows the young people to become volunteers within the organisation to help inspire others. They also brought one young person to PWC to help inspire them about future careers and what was possible for them as they had an interest in working in finance.

One of the project leaders, Tommy said this about the programme:

"We are very grateful for the funding that we received from the Planned Interventions fund as it really helped to bring life to our summer programme. Through taking part in the group work, activities and the residential the young people were able to make memories that they will hold on to for years to come and this would not have been possible without this funding."

One young person said:

"Going to YEHA is one of the only places in which I can fully be myself, and all the workers there support everyone."

Chris Gardener – Director of Good Relations and T:BUC Division in TEO commented.

'This project is an excellent example of the wider benefits our good relations projects can have on individuals and the wider community. It is heartening to see the project has allowed the young people to grow more confident and this will hopefully continue to benefit all involved well into the future. Congratulations to all involved.'



Good Relations Awards 2025

The Good Relations Awards 2025 is intended to recognise the increasing level of outstanding community relations, intercultural and peacebuilding work that is taking place across all our communities in Northern Ireland.

This important work is already improving people's lives, their outlook for the future, and further strengthening community spirit.

This year there are six Awards categories (increased from five last year), which we hope will shine a light on those who always go above and beyond to make the world a better place for all.

For 2025, the Community Relations Council and The Executive Office (TEO) were delighted to work in partnership with NICVA, NI Youth Forum, Volunteer Now, and Community Foundation for Northern Ireland. We also launched the inaugural Good Relations 'Housing for All' Award in partnership with NI Housing Executive.

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.



CRC Exceptional Achievement

Winner
Kathy Wolff



Summary

Kathy is currently Coordinator of the Community Relations Forum in Newtownabbey. Kathy is a passionate advocate of good relations, equity and equality; continuously working to support individuals and communities in her local area and beyond.

Kathy developed the Great Glengormley Get Together, an event that brings together a range of community groups, individuals, and cross sector stakeholders to promote positive community relations; hosted within a contested space to create a shared space for all.

Each year Kathy ensures that this event has meaningful representation from a diverse range of individuals inclusive of and beyond the traditional communities including a range of New Comer communities. Kathy also delivered Councils Good Relations Capacity Building Programme engaging with and supported groups to develop community relations knowledge, skills and confidence.

Over the years Kathy has been involved in Peace Partnerships, Rural Networks, Neighbourhood Renewal, Policing Forums, the International School of Peace Studies and Good Relations Partnerships.

CRC Exceptional Achievement

Runner up John "Jock" Carson

Summary

John (Jock) Carson has worked for TIDES Training for 13 years and is currently the Mediations and Training Services Manager. During this time, he has proven to have an exceptional commitment to Good Relations work across the region, working with individuals, groups and statutory bodies to promote mutual respect and understanding within our communities. As a Mediator, Jock has worked with countless individuals and groups throughout Northern Ireland to support them to navigate through conflict situations and to all parties to reach a resolution together. Jock has proven his sustained and long-term commitment promoting Good Relations amongst those he is working with by offering further training, accredited OCN courses and community capacity building as well as exploring shared history and culture with neighbouring communities, resulting in cross community collaboration and working together to create a shared future.

CRC Exceptional Achievement

Runner up Catherine Cooke

Summary

Catherine Cooke has been a driving force in the community and voluntary sector for over 30 years, championing empowerment, inclusion, and good relations across the North West. Catherine has created a safe and welcoming space for women from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds, offering resources, education, and opportunities to thrive. Beginning her career as a grassroots activist in 1987, Catherine gained extensive experience in mediation and conflict resolution as a training officer with the Peace and Reconciliation Group. Her work has consistently focused on addressing inequality, celebrating diversity, and fostering trust and collaboration within and between communities. Catherine's dedication extends to regional peace initiatives such as Peace IV and Peace Plus partnerships, where her leadership continues to shape a more inclusive and equitable society. Her unwavering commitment leaves a profound legacy of connection and empowerment.

CRC Exceptional Achievement

Runner up Carole Kane

Summary

Carole Kane has been employed by Shankill Parish Caring Association in the Jethro Centre, Lurgan as their Good Relations Project Officer since May 2021. She is highly articulate and hardworking, routinely demonstrating her exceptional commitment and dedication to Good Relations. Carole has spent the majority of her working life, directly enabling Good Relations work. She has approached her role in the Jethro Centre with eagerness and enthusiasm. Her unrelenting professionalism sets the tone for SPCA. She is a strong educational leader with distinctive values which she brings to a range of challenging situations. Her drive and diligence have ensured that she continually makes a highly valued contribution to all that SPCA deliver.



Volunteer of the Year

Winner
Cooper McClure



Summary

Cooper has given his time freely as a volunteer to support the work of Midlands Recreational and Social Association for over 40 years as the Treasurer and coach for the Boxing Club. His dedication to the young people who attend the club is fantastic. He trained Carl Frampton during his amateur years, helping him to achieve his dreams and Carl recognises the support by continuing to prompt the work of the club to this day. Since he took over as Head Coach in 2019 Cooper has been instrumental in transforming the club into a new modern shared facility which everyone in the community can use. For Cooper it is not just about the physical exercise - it is about providing a safe space for young people to go and building their mental health and the skills and experiences which they will need in life. He works tirelessly to find funding for cross community and peacebuilding programmes with other clubs across the interface in North Belfast promoting respect and diversity for all. He really does make a real difference in the community. Truly a volunteer who deserves recognition.

Volunteer of the Year

Runner up
Bill Lockhart

Summary

Most of his previous spare time and newfound retirement time is dedicated to others in making their lives better. Over 60 years of volunteering, while working full time and bringing up a family Bill is the definition of a volunteer. Bill is always promoting a culture of understanding, respecting differences, breaking down barriers and celebrating the richness of community diversity. His leadership, skills and empathy for others is an example of how we all can make life better for those around us. He is passionate about the importance of good relations and diversity in the community and ensures it is embedded in all that he does when establishing new groups or supporting the groups that he is already involved in.

Volunteer of the Year

Runner up
Adam McGibbon

Summary

Adam McGibbon is a determined, long-time advocate who has volunteered his time for more than a decade to promote the benefits of Integrated Education. He has been a key member of the 'Integrated Alumni' group since its founding 12 years ago. Outside of Integrated Education advocacy, Adam is an award-winning environmental campaigner and writer, having won the inaugural Spirit of Northern Ireland 'Climate Hero' Award and the 2021 'David vs Goliath' Award for his successful efforts to change environmental policy in the UK and abroad. He has done his work advocating for Integrated Education with passion, and entirely as a volunteer, and is worthy of recognition for his tireless efforts.



Youth Award

Winner
Emma Baptista



Summary

Emma is from Portadown. Her family moved to NI to seek work. She became politically active after Brexit and ultimately helped both her parents get their settled status. Emma has been involved in a cross border, cross community project funded by the International Fund for Ireland from 2023-24, during which time she exhibited exceptional leadership skills. Emma took a leading role within the project, encouraging her peers to come together to discuss issues of mutual concern. The young people on the project came from religious, cultural and politically diverse backgrounds, and Emma's contributions ensured that all views were actively listened to and respected. Due to issues raised within the project, Emma was motivated to take active steps to improve youth participation within her local community. She successfully lobbied the Armagh Banbridge Craigavon Council and the Education Authority Youth Service to re-instate a local Youth Council so that young people's voices from all backgrounds could be heard to produce change and amplify the voices and ideas of young people within the local community. Emma aims to go on to become the first member of her family to attend university.

Youth Award

Runner up
Expert by Experience Youth Mentors

Summary

The Expert By Experience (EBE) Youth Mentors, a group of 7 young people, are tearing down barriers and building a sense of community and belonging for other care-experienced young people across the region. The EBEs, based in Include Youth offices across NI, work tirelessly to create a positive and inclusive future, strive for equality and celebrate diversity through a range of engaging cultural activities. EBEs engage in discussions with young people, dispelling myths and stereotypes, and promoting a culture of mutual respect. EBEs remove barriers for young people they support through a level of empathy and understanding that only someone with a similar lived experience can offer. This invaluable insight has made them incredible advocates for their peers, supporting them to feed into policy consultations to drive societal change and improve good relations.

Youth Award

Runner up
St Brigid's College Drama Group

Summary

A group of pupils from St. Brigid's College demonstrated remarkable creativity, insight, and courage in devising and performing a play addressing the complex issues of sectarianism and racism. Tackling such challenging and sensitive topics requires not only artistic skill but also empathy and maturity. Through their performance, they have shown the power of storytelling to challenge prejudices, spark important conversations, and inspire change. Their ability to bring these themes to life with authenticity and passion is a testament to their hard work and commitment. By shedding light on these issues, they are helping to build understanding and unity within our communities. Their efforts are truly commendable, and they should be immensely proud of their contribution to improving good relations.



Community Champion

Winner
Jonah Atos



Summary

Jonah Atos is the heart and soul of the Filipino Community in the North-West. For over a decade she has worked to unite the Filipino Community, tackling isolation and instilling a proud cultural identity across generations, and outreaching wider to promote awareness, tackle racism and lead from the front as a community activist.

Jonah is International Nurse Co-ordinator for Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHST), Chair of WHST Ethnically Diverse Network, Chair of Royal College of Nursing Ethnically Diverse network, Professional Officer for Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion at NI Practice, deliverer of Clinical Educators cultural competency training, organiser of GR Week events, Board Member of NW Carnival Initiative, Board member of FREF (Foyle Racial Equality Forum), DCSDC PEACE IV and PEACEPLUS influencer.

Known as 'Auntie Jonah' to many young NI Filipinos, she's an energetic powerhouse, bundle of positivity and an inspiration for Good Relations.



Community Champion

Runner up
Chaudhary Hamza Riaz

Summary

Chaudhary Hamza Riaz is an advocate for equality, diversity, and inclusion, making a profound impact at Ulster University and across Northern Ireland. As the first international and BAME+ Vice President for Equality and Belonging, Hamza has championed underrepresented voices, breaking barriers and inspiring change. His leadership in Equality and Diversity Forums and initiatives such as Pride Parades, interfaith events, and cultural celebrations (Eid, Holi, Diwali) has fostered unity and mutual respect among diverse communities within and beyond University.

Community Champion

Runner up
Connor Kerr/Becky Bellamy

Summary

Connor and Becky promote acceptance, respect and inclusion in the most joyous and celebratory way. In a queer-positive, everyone-welcome space they have created an interlinking of communities to work tirelessly for the benefit of all. Their 'Sunday Service' builds a place of advocacy and solidarity. Their 'Love Pack' drives and foodbank collections help the most vulnerable in our community. Their strong anti-racism activism further underpins their commitment to the rights and protection of the individual. All of this is done with a focus on joy, celebration and excitement so that they can promote a feeling of lives well lived. They are true advocates for our whole community and trusted supporters of individual's across communities.

Connecting Communities

Winner

Jubilee Community Farm



Summary

Jubilee Farm welcomes everyone in the community. It is core to the ethos of Jubilee Community Benefit Society that the space is available to those of Christian faith or none, and those of various faiths and cultural backgrounds. Asylum seekers and refugees visit the farm weekly to volunteer. Yonas from Eritrea described their experience, "Jubilee Farm is a place where I can enjoy nature, it is quiet, fresh air and the moments I enjoy with friendly and caring people. I also want to leave my footprint by planting the trees and would love to see nature protected and the trees grow one day."

In addition, the weekly Social Farming sessions for individuals with a Learning Disability provide integration through a community-based service which respects and supports all levels of ability.

Mohammed from Iran outlined, "Asylum seekers stay passively in hotels and welcome opportunities to change their mood, the farm is one of the places that revives the feeling of life and vitality".

Through supporting asylum seekers and refugees to join the weekly volunteering sessions at Jubilee Farm, Jubilee Community Benefit Society has supported newcomers to the local community to make connections. These connections are beneficial for all as understanding and appreciation of experiences and differences are fostered.

Connecting Communities

Runner up

Culture on the Hill (Ryan Curry)

Summary

Culture on the Hill brought together 9 primary and post primary schools from the Dungannon area, the culmination of a programme celebrating the rich and diverse multicultural backgrounds of residents in the Hill of O'Neill and Ranfurly House on 23 October 2024. Over 500 young people and their families came together to celebrate and enjoy an unforgettable night of music, song, dance and storytelling. It was truly inspiring to see how the young people from a range of different backgrounds, engaged with and enjoyed each other's cultural traditions.

Connecting Communities

Runner up

Glenside Farm (Iain and Malini Colville)

Summary

Glenside Farm Comber CIC covers approximately 80 acres and is found in the beautiful drumlins of County Down, 2 miles outside of Comber and 10 minutes away from Belfast. Iain and Malini Colville who use the farm to people from a range of community backgrounds and experiences to find a sense of health and wellbeing through farming, nature and community. Glenside Farm offers access to an authentic working farm and provides meaningful opportunities for participants and volunteers to engage with farming, animals, and nature as an opportunity to work and learn together to build good relations.



Shared Housing "Housing for All" Award

Winner

Portstewart Community Association



Summary

Portstewart Community Association is made up of dedicated individuals from diverse backgrounds. The Association is driven by a shared commitment to creating positive change and building good relations within the local community. Forward-thinking in their approach, they embrace innovative ideas and sustainable solutions, always striving to anticipate future challenges and opportunities. They create an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute to the exciting portfolio of projects they deliver across Portstewart every year to build united communities together.

Shared Housing "Housing for All" Award

Runner up

Carrick Connect

Summary

Carrick Connect's project work in Carrickfergus exemplifies a holistic approach to promoting good relations and combating homelessness stigma within a shared housing community. It is funded through the Department for Communities and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and supported by Clánmil's "Housing for All" initiative. By creating a safe space for open conversations around sensitive topics, Carrick Connect have inspired a lasting legacy of mutual respect and cultural understanding. Ultimately, this initiative stands out for its capacity to foster genuine, enduring change—empowering the local Carrick community to work together, tackle shared challenges, and lay the groundwork for a more unified, sustainable future.

Shared Housing "Housing for All" Award

Runner up

Doreen Murugi

Summary

Doreen Murugi has been volunteering with the Housing for All programme since May 2023. She has been instrumental in setting up and developing the newly formed African Caribbean Community Network, based in Derry-Londonderry. Doreen works tirelessly to develop and deliver programmes and events to support people who have just arrived as well as people who have lived here for some time. Doreen has promoted the African and Caribbean culture within the North-West and over the last eighteen months has delivered various programmes to thousands of people including World Africa Day, Easter and Christmas celebrations. She supports families on a daily basis to obtain help from local organisations. She is enthusiastic and driven and most importantly, Doreen is a truly kind person who deserves recognition for all of her hard work.

Good Relations Awards - Community Arts Partnership



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

CAP is the lead agency for the promotion, development and delivery of community arts in Northern Ireland.

Glassmaking and Wooden Base

Each bespoke award is crafted using fused glass techniques, where Natasha individually hand-cuts and layers coloured glass before firing it in a kiln at 800°C to create a dynamic, high-quality design. This method allows her to produce vibrant, customised pieces that align with Good Relations Award branding.

The wood used for the base of the Awards has an interesting story. The wood turner – Richard Phelan of RJP Turning – has used Irish Elm from a tree which has naturally fallen, due to storms, in the Ballylough House Estate near Bushmills, Northern Ireland. He lets the wood air dry for a period of time, to season the material, preventing cracks. He chose this particular wood due its natural grain and the fact it is a hard native wood. The wood turner then finished the wooden base with a natural polish to enhance the natural colour and marks on the wood.

Natasha collaborates closely with clients to design unique, meaningful awards that honour achievements. Each recipient should feel inspired and proud to receive such an innovative, handcrafted piece in recognition of their hard work



You can find out more
about Natasha here.



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



Community Poets

CAP also invited emerging Community Poets to reflect on the values of "good relations" for the Good Relations Awards 2025.

The central values the poets reflected upon through haiku included the overall theme of Good Relations as well as the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) strategy.

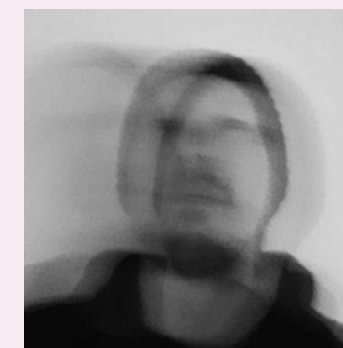
Haiku

Haiku are a type of short form poetry originally from Japan. Traditionally, a haiku has three lines with five syllables in the first and third lines, and seven syllables in the second line. Often set in nature, haiku focus on a brief moment in time, juxtaposing two images, and creating a sudden sense of enlightenment.

As part of the Good Relations Awards programme, we invited the authors of each haiku to read their poems, and the videos are available on the CRC website -



Featured right you will find a transcript of the haiku poetry, as well as more information about the four featured community poets.



Composed by Colin Dardis

Colin Dardis is the author of ten poetry collections, most recently with the lakes (above/ground press, 2023) and *What We Look Like in the Future* (Red Wolf Editions, 2023). A neurodivergent poet, editor and sound artist, his work has been published widely throughout Ireland, the UK and USA. Colin is co-host of the long-running open mic night, *Purely Poetry*, held in the Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast, and editor of the poetry blog, *Poem Alone*.

**early morning frost
on dead leaves – a sudden sun,
the hillside breathes in**

**a break in the clouds –
finally, the day reveals
its gap-toothed laughter**

**in absence of trees,
birds perch on our aerials –
wild reinvention**

**this bird, back and forth,
back and forth, until every
fledging has their fill**



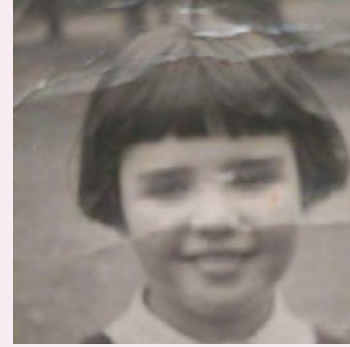
Composed by Heather Martin

Heather Martin is a poet and playwright from Australia, currently living in Belfast. As a playwright she has had seven of her plays produced across Australia, Ireland, England, and Switzerland and two are published. In 2016 she was shortlisted for Queensland Theatre's Young Playwright of the Year award. She is the founder of Belfast Playwrights and ScriptJam Playwriting Workshop with Colm Keegan.

**Is it safe there now?
Say those who don't understand
the sun's warm and gold.**

**It's identity
that matters the most. But now,
we don't need to know.**

**The North no longer
has an assumed narrative. Now
we write together.**



Composed by Una Woods

Una Woods is a Belfast writer who has published prose and poetry over the years, from *The Dark Hole Days*, published by Blackstaff Press, 1985, through to contributions of stories, poems and prose pieces to anthologies in Ireland and the UK, including *The Glass Shore*, published by New Island Books, 2016. For some time her focus has been on poems and to date she has published four poetry collections with Ashtrees Press – *Afternoons*, *an icicle for an eye*, *splintered vision* and *The ordinary of the disquiet*.

www.unawoodspoetry-ireland.com/

**To begin again the effort
that becomes nothing when ended
like this poem**

**You see the point
of fail
you dot the i**

**In the apple-voweled orchard
through consonants of trees
metaphors make days of sun-
glimmers**

**The orange light in the
ajar door
you'll be home in a chink**



Composed by Jane McComb

Jane is a photographer and poet living in Co Down. Exhibitions include The Ulster Museum, Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Marketplace Armagh, Canvas and The Royal Ulster Academy. Photographic images accompanied by poetry: *Poetry and Place* – John Hewitt Writing School and touring Ards Peninsula. Aspects Literature Festival Bangor. International Women's Day Exhibition Liberty Island. Published poetry: Anthologies including *Poetry Now*, *Gaze*, and *Poetry in Motion* for the last 6 years. Online: Recording with The Ulster Orchestra responding to her poem *On Belfast Lough* Community Relations Awards in conjunction with CAP Arts: Haikus. Most recently she was a reader at The Seamus Heaney Centre Flow project.

**darkest of winters
yet spring will come once again
as every year**

**under frozen ground
green shoots wait unwearingly
and roots bear on down**

**sunshine will break through
interminable grey skies
wakening tired souls**

**the song birds will sing
breaking into the dream space
heralding springtime**

**soil and sand will warm
and we will walk light-footed
on welcoming ground**

**this bird, back and forth,
back and forth, until every
fledging has their fill**

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

Buddy Up Celebration Event

Buddy Up! is a schools-based peace building programme, which, over the last

6 years

has been supported through TEO's Urban Villages initiative.

Community Relations in Schools (CRIS) has worked with

40 school communities

to develop 19 Buddy Up Partnerships, directly engaged upwards of

4000 children and 800 adults

The approach prioritised those schools achieving or working towards Schools of Sanctuary status. This has also enabled schools in predominantly single identity areas to develop cross-community connections.

Urban Villages support enabled CRIS to pilot a Buddy Up Kitemark and Award with Ligoniel and St Vincent de Paul Primary Schools partnership in North Belfast. The schools were presented with the

first 'GRACE' award

(Good Relations and Collaborative Education)

in October 2023 and went on to win an Aisling award later that month.

CRIS has also produced

3 Ripples of peace impact case studies

which focus on 3 different Buddy Up partnerships in South Belfast, Colin and East Belfast UV areas.

In September 2024, CRIS was hosted by Belfast City Council at the City Hall to

celebrate the success of the Buddy Up! programme.

As well as representatives from Urban Villages, CRIS was also joined by other funding partners, parents, school staff, pupils, elected officials, academics, community organisations and Junior Minister Aisling Reilly.

CRIS used the celebration event to launch their 'small steady steps' film

where principals, parents, pupils and teachers all spoke about their experiences and their reflections on the impact Buddy Up! has had on them and in their school communities.

UV funding has also contributed to the development

of the Buddy Up Digital Media Resource

as well as a research project which produced a Trust Indicators Framework, trialled during 2023/24 academic year.



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

Programme News

The Shared Housing Programme (the Programme) has its origins in the Northern Ireland (NI) Executive Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Strategy. TBUC reflects the Executive's commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society, and it represents a major change in the way that good relations will be delivered across government.

The Department for Communities (DfC / the Department) committed to delivering the T:BUC Headline Action: To create 10 new shared neighbourhood developments. The shared neighbourhoods were delivered under the T:BUC key priorities 2 and 3, and these priorities will continue to drive the delivery of the Shared Housing Programme ('Housing for All') throughout the 2016-2021 Programme for Government (PfG).



Open Botanic 2024

The Open Botanic community street festival took place on 15th September 2024, organised by Forward South Partnership and supported in part by Radius Housing, Apex and Ark Housing through 'Housing for All'.

Open Botanic was a community family friendly festival where Botanic Avenue; was car-free for an afternoon. Open Botanic featured community kiosks; spaces designed by local communities to represent their ideas and interests.

This project aimed to involve communities in processes and discussions around regeneration; place-making; climate and greening spaces to influence longer term community led change.

The differences that Open Botanic makes are that it involves the diverse communities living in the area in a conversation about place and an opportunity to input into what they would like to see and experience in Botanic Avenue. Open Botanic will benefit communities that live in and around Botanic Avenue, the local communities in -

1
Sandy Row

3
Holyland's

5
Students

2
Donegall Pass

4
Newly arrived communities who are seeking asylum living in the hotels

6
Inner South Belfast residents

The community workshops took place between May to September 2024. The Open Botanic event itself was run for 4 hours on Sunday 15th September '24.

Open Botanic is grassroots, family-friendly, community festival. With three key programming threads; Culture; Wellbeing; Family, the event creates a strong ethos of relationship building from a blend of cultural celebration, community appreciation and collective urban reimagining.

Pedestrianising Botanic Avenue creates a new space for engagement and collaboration, enhancing community ties and showcasing diverse cultural traditions. It emphasises the connectivity of the Botanic/ Shaftesbury Square areas as a connecting route to the city centre and an intersection that brings together the communities of Donegall Pass, Sandy Row, The Village, Lower Ormeau & the Holylands.

The event celebrates the area's rich history and cultural diversity, including PUL, CRN, and the growing migrant communities, but also focuses on health, wellbeing, and social cohesion. With planning initiated by FSP and community co-design workshops as part of the Street Space project from QUB MA Architecture students scheduled from May to September 2024, the festival intertwined art, cultural performances, and family activities with long term community engagement.



The festival, organised by Forward South Partnership, is run in collaboration with Queen's University Belfast Architecture and Planning. Open Botanic is supported by Belfast City Council Festivals' Fund, the Housing Executive, UKRI - Arts and Humanities Research Council, Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility at Queen's, Ormeau Business Park and the Department for Communities and The Housing Executive's 'Housing for All' Shared Housing Programme with delivery through Radius, Apex, and Ark Housing Associations.

The Open Botanic Event 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. Over £13.6 million has been invested in three shared housing developments and associated five-year Good Relations Plans in Belfast.



Culture on the Hill: Celebrating Diversity and Culture in Dungannon

A vibrant evening of song, dance, and storytelling unfolded on Wednesday, October 23rd, at The Hill of The O'Neill, as part of the "Culture on the Hill" event in Dungannon.

The event, organised by Choice Housing in partnership with Apex and Radius, was supported by the Department for Communities (DfC) 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.



A potential £15.7M may be invested by these housing associations in the area through shared housing developments at Earls Court, Fortview and Sycamore Drive, and their associated five-year Good Relations Plans. A joint Dungannon Advisory Group has been established to support delivery of these plans.

The event brought together pupils and staff from nine local schools in Dungannon, highlighting the importance of community engagement and cultural appreciation. Those on attendance were treated to captivating performances incorporating dance, music and story telling. Attendees experienced a wide array of artistic expressions that reflects the diverse backgrounds of the students.

Jonathon Blakely, Community Development Manager, Choice Housing, "Through our shared housing programme we are thrilled to have brought together so many voices to celebrate the richness of the community. Culture on the Hill is not just an event; it's a celebration of the diversity that makes the Dungannon area special. It reinforces the importance of understanding and respecting each other's cultures."

In addition to the performances, pupils held an inspiring art exhibition, displaying their creative works and providing a platform for young artists to share their unique perspectives and stories.

Valerie Morrison, Good Relations Officer, Apex-

"Dungannon is one of the most multi-cultural areas in Northern Ireland, and there is a real openness to finding out about other cultures and ways of life. This is one of a number of Good Relations Projects we have delivered since Sycamore Drive was built, and we can see the positive impact on community relations this work is having due to the commitment and engagement of local groups with our Advisory Group and Good Relations events."



Cross community and cross border Ability Counts football tournament, Choice Housing Association

People with disabilities and Downs Syndrome groups and their families from across the city of Derry were joined by groups from Sligo, Donegal, and Belfast for a brilliant day of football and fun at Sean Dolans GAC on Saturday 8th December at the first cross community and cross border Ability Counts tournament delivered by Celtic FC Foundation and Choice Housing.

With 60 participants and over 120 people present the tournament was delivered by staff from Celtic FC Foundation, with young people from the Rio Ferdinand Foundation volunteer programme in Derry/Londonderry, Enniskillen and Belfast acting as referees and linesman to gain their work experience as part of their youth leadership qualification.

In a surprise visit and to the delight of participants and especially younger members of the crowd, Santa made an appearance to referee the final and three of his elves ran the line and acted as VAR official. Rumours that that Santa and his elves bore a striking resemblance to some of the young volunteers on the day cannot be verified!

Following a full day of football and two tournaments to cater for differing ability levels, all players and families were treated to a lunch and a trophy and medals ceremony with trophies awarded by Santas elves, and Santa provided all players with a chocolate selection box as an early reward.

The success of days like the Ability Counts tournament is based on the number of smiles we can see during the day, and on that evidence the day was a stunning success and plans are already afoot for similar tournaments to be hosted at Sligo Rovers to return the experience with teams from Derry/Londonderry travelling to try and bring the trophy back.



The event was supported by the Department for Communities (DfC) 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. A potential total of £21.7M may be invested in the Rosses Gate, Derry-Londonderry, shared housing development and associated five-year Good Relations Plan.

Discover More

If you would like more information on Ability Counts in Ireland, or in Glasgow, please contact cfcfoundation@celticfc.co.uk

For more information about the Shared Housing Programme please visit:



United Youth Programme

Programme summary

United Youth is aligned with the vision and objectives of United Youth as set out in the T:BUC Strategy. The programme focuses on supporting participants to develop capabilities in the areas of personal development, good relations and citizenship, ultimately enhancing their employability and improving their life chances.



Programme News

The PEACEPLUS Youth Programme follows on from the successful Peace4Youth Programme in delivering a programme for young people not in education, employment or training.

The six projects appointed to deliver the programme are:

- The Strive Programme led by Include Youth
- Heros Plus led by Mencap NI
- Youthscape Plus led by South West College
- Journeys led by Springboard Opportunities Ltd
- Empower 2 Transform led by YMCA Ireland
- Amplify led by Youth Action

Delivery of the cross-border PEACEPLUS Youth Programme began in April 2024 targeting

7,500
young people aged
14 to 24
years old over a
four-year period.



The programme is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body and at the end of November 2024,

over 1,700
young people have
participated
in the new
programme.

Journeys – Springboard Opportunities Ltd

Journeys is a PEACEPLUS Youth programme funded project delivered by Springboard Opportunities Ltd.

Participants of the project recently participated in a transformative masterclass with Theatre of Witness, renowned for its unique approach to storytelling, healing, and peacebuilding in Northern Ireland.

This masterclass event offered participants a rare opportunity to engage with the legacy of the Troubles through powerful storytelling, exploring themes of reconciliation and shared understanding.

Many of the young people lives have been shaped by the legacy of the Troubles even years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, and for them this was an eye-opening experience.

Daniel, a participant on the Journeys programme shared his perspective of the event:

"The stories gave me a lot more empathy for them. I thought differently afterwards, I would like to hear more about the aftermath of The Troubles and how these people actually dealt with their trauma."

By the end of the masterclass, many of the young people expressed a newfound appreciation for the power of storytelling as a tool for peacebuilding. They left with a deeper understanding of the ongoing challenges in Northern Ireland's journey toward healing and reconciliation, and the importance of empathy in that process.

Overall, the day proved highly impactful for participants and was a key step in their exploration of Good Relations.



The PEACEPLUS Youth Programme is delivered and managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) and the Department for the Economy (DfE) is the Accountable Department in Northern Ireland.

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

District Council Good Relations Programme: Shared Learning Forums

The District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP) is a match funded good relations funding Programme delivered jointly by The Executive Office (TEO) and District Councils as part of the wider 'Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Strategy. The Programme aims to improve relations between and within District Council areas and support local solutions to local good relations issues.

Over the last year, the DCGRP team in TEO co-ordinated a series of Shared Learning Forums, bringing together TEO staff, Community Relations Council (CRC) representatives, and local Council Good Relations Officers (GROs). These events provided a platform for attendees to discuss a range of common issues and share information and good practice on Good Relations delivery.

This series of events culminated in a plenary forum involving all 11 councils, along with TEO and CRC colleagues, hosted in the Glenavon House Hotel in Cookstown. After opening remarks from Gavin King, head of the District Councils, Camps and Interventions (DCI) branch, TEO's mapping and outcomes team gave a presentation showcasing new ways for GROs to demonstrate the success and effectiveness of their projects.

Each council then gave a short presentation discussing successes and challenges in delivery, and examples of innovative practice. Topics included Holocaust memorial events, environmental programmes, cultural celebrations & Traveller outreach work. The event concluded with closing remarks from Jaqueline Irwin, Chief Executive of CRC, who stressed the value and importance of the work carried out by Good Relations staff.

Feedback on these events has been very positive, and it is hoped to further develop opportunities for shared learning as the Programme continues



Discover More

If you would like to hear more about the District Council programmes please contact:

District.CouncilGR@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

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





How do we achieve it?

At the heart of the T:BUC Strategy is a commitment to genuine and productive collaborative working between the Executive Office and other NICS Departments, central and local government, and between the public sector and the community and voluntary sector.

What is it?

The 'Together: Building a United Community' (T:BUC) Strategy, reflects the Executive's commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society.

T:buc

What is the vision?

The T:BUC Strategy outlines a vision of a united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation – one which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced.

How do we measure success?

Success is measured against the relevant Programme for Government outcome indicators and the four key aims of the strategy itself. All of our funded programmes have a strong focus on outcomes – we want to clearly articulate what difference is being made and to see how relations have been improved. We want to identify what works and to recognise and share best practice.



Celebrating Good Practice *April 2025*



Discover More

Visit the new T:BUC website for
further information on the T:BUC
Strategy at:

www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/tbuc

