

Public Document Pack

**Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**



**Belfast
City Council**

19th January, 2026

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet both online and in-person, in the Lavery Room, City Hall on Friday, 23rd January, 2026 at 9.30 am, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. Routine Matters

- (a) Apologies
- (b) Minutes
- (c) Declarations of Interest

2. Presentation

- (a) Northern Ireland Water

3. Restricted Items

- (a) Revenue Estimates 2026/27 and Medium-Term Financial Planning (Pages 1 - 12)
- (b) Community Support Plan - Large Grant Funding Programme (Report to follow)

- (c) Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann (Report to follow)
- (d) City Hall Income Generation Project (Report to follow)
- (e) Update on Employees on Temporary Contracts and Agency Workers (Pages 13 - 26)
- (f) Organisational Reviews and Change Programme (Report to follow)
- (g) Communications Update (Report to follow)

4. Matters referred back from Council/Motions

- (a) Motions - Quarterly Update (Report to follow)

5. Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

- (a) Summer Community Diversionary Programme (Report to follow)
- (b) Performance Improvement Plan 2026/27 (Report to follow)
- (c) Planning Information (Report to follow)
- (d) City Innovation programme (Report to follow)

6. Physical Programme and Asset Management

- (a) Physical Programme Update (Report to follow)
- (b) Asset Management (Report to follow)

7. Finance, Procurement and Performance

- (a) Contracts Update (Report to follow)

8. Equality and Good Relations

- (a) Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting (Pages 27 - 214)

9. Operational Issues

- (a) Minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum (Pages 215 - 218)
- (b) Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality (Pages 219 - 224)
- (c) Request for use of City Hall grounds for various events in 2026 (Pages 225 - 256)

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Agenda Item 3a

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6
of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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Agenda Item 3e

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Subject:	Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 12 th January 2026
Date:	23 January 2026
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Godfrey McCartney, Good Relations Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number	<input type="text"/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
<p>After Committee Decision <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>After Council Decision <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Sometime in the future <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Never <input type="checkbox"/></p>	

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues	
1.1	To report to committee on the key issues discussed at the Shared City Partnership meeting held on the 12 th January 2026
2.0 Recommendation	
2.1	That the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approve the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on the 12 th January, including:

2.2	<u>Good Relations Action Plan Quarter 3 Update</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the contents of the report.
2.3	<u>PEACEPLUS – Local Community Action Plan Secretariat Update</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership Members noted the contents of the report, specifically the process for tolerances and the relevant percentage approvals by Project Managers, Programme Manager / Good Relations Manager and Programme Board, and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also notes and agrees the content of the report.
2.4	<u>Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report
2.5	<u>Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report
2.6	<u>Community Regeneration & Transformation Thematic Update</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report
2.7	<u>Workshop - Good Relations Audit Strategy and Action Plan</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they also note the contents of the report, agree the contents of the new Good Relations Audit and 2026/2027 Good Relations Action Plan for issue to The Executive Office, and approve the Good Relations Strategy to undergo a public consultation exercise via the Council's Your Say Platform. It was also agreed that the Partnership would hold a further consultation session on 4th February to further consider the Draft Good Relations Strategy
2.8	<u>Any Other Business</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was no further business.
3.0	<u>Main Report</u>
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> The Shared City Partnership is a Working Group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which consists of Elected members and representatives from various sectors

	across the city. The minutes from the Partnership are brought before the Committee for approval on a monthly basis.
3.2	<p>The key issues on the agenda at the 12th January 2026 meeting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership Papers of the 1st December 2025 • Good Relations Action Plan Quarter 3 Update • PEACEPLUS – Local Community Action Plan Secretariat Update • Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update • Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update • Community Regeneration & Transformation Thematic Update • Good Relations Audit Strategy and Action Plan • Any Other Business
3.3	<p>More details regarding the above issues and recommendations are included in the following minutes of the meeting attached in Appendix 1: Minutes of the Shared City Partnership from the 1st December 2025; Appendix 2: PeacePlus Performance Dashboard; Appendix 3: PeacePlus Tolerances Process; Appendix 4: Draft Good Relations Strategy 2026 – 2035; Appendix 5: Good Relations Audit 2026 -2029 and Appendix 6: Draft Good Relations Action Plan 2026.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>All financial implications are covered through existing budgets, and the Good Relations Action Plan is included in the current estimates process.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The recommendations of the Partnership are to promote the work of the Council in promoting good relations and will enhance equality and good relations impacts for the City of Belfast.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Minutes of the Shared City Partnership from the 12th January 2026</p> <p>Appendix 2 – PeacePlus Performance Dashboard</p> <p>Appendix 3 – PeacePlus Tolerances Process</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Draft Good Relations Strategy 2026 - 2035</p> <p>Appendix 5 – Good Relations Audit 2026 -2029</p> <p>Appendix 6 – Draft Good Relations Action Plan 2026</p>

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SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Monday 12th January, 2026

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Members present: Councillor J. Duffy (Chairperson); and Councillors Abernethy, Lyons and McLaughlin.

External Members: Ms. L. Euler, BHSCT; Mr. J. Donnelly, Community and Voluntary Sector; Mr. M. McBride, Education Authority; Mr. L. Gunn, NIHE; Ms. J. Irwin, Community Relations Council; Ms. T. Mimna, Executive Office; Ms. A. Roberts, Community and Voluntary Sector; Mr. G. Walker, Community and Voluntary Sector; and Ms. A. M. White, British Red Cross.

In attendance: Mr. G. McCartney, Good Relations Manager; Ms. D. McKinney, PEACE Programme Manager; Mr. D. Robinson, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer; Ms. L. Dolan, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer; Ms. E. Kennedy, Project Officer (Good Relations); Ms. N. Lynch (Good Relations); Ms. L. Holmes, Community Engagement Officer; Mr. P. Osbourne (Rubicon Consulting); and Mr. A. McMullan, Members' Services and Digital Support Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland, Councillor Smyth and Independent Members Ms. B. Arthurs. Rev. G. Kennedy and Mr. W. Naeem.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 1st December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 19th December.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Duffy, Mr. J. Donnelly and Ms. A. Roberts declared an interest under item 4, Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update and item 4a, Celebrating Cultures and Diversity Thematic Update in that they were associated with those organisations delivering projects under the PEACEPLUS Programme.

It was noted that, as those items did not become subject to debate or discussion, the Members were not required to leave from the meeting whilst the matters were under consideration.

Good Relations Action Plan Quarter 3 Update

The Acting Senior Good Relations Officer, Mr. Robinson, provided the Partnership with an update on the delivery of the Council's Good Relations Action Plan during Quarter 3, which covered the period October to December 2025.

He reminded Members that the total value of the Action Plan, as agreed by the Partnership in December, 2024 was £600,000, and the total available for programmes was £448,862.20. This was 75% funded by The Executive Office. Of this amount, £271,990.67 was allocated to a range of projects in Quarter 1. A further £88,716.67 was allocated in Quarter 2 and £65,350.66 during Quarter 3.

A summary progress update on activity and funding allocations is below:

Code	Key Priority	Project Summary	Budget	Progress Quarter 3	Q3 allocation
BCC1	All 4 themes – projects will be aligned to relevant theme	Good Relations Small Grants Prog Criteria focusing on the 4 T:BUC themes and providing opportunities for organisations across Belfast to engage in activities which promote Good Relations.	£160,000	48 projects awarded letters of offer in Q1 continuing to be delivered.	£0
BCC2	Cultural expression	St Patrick's Day Civic Events programme to embed Good Relations Outcomes into events marking the celebration of Saint Patrick's Day.	£20,000	Programme agreed to support an inclusive carnival parade in March 2026	£20,000
BCC3	Cultural expression	Positive Cultural Expression Programme – to facilitate the positive expression of cultural heritage through the provision of bonfire beacons on the 11 July.	£40,000	All activity delivered in Q2.	£0
BCC4	Shared Community	Civic Engagement and Learning Programme To develop and deliver a range of programmes of events and training on good relations/diversity issues.	£20,000	Good Relations Strategy Consultation SCP review event December Migrant Forum meeting Belfast Islamic Centre training prog Regional Shared Learning event	£321.33 £766.33 £500.00 £400.00 £213.00 Total: £2,200.66

BCC5	Shared Community	Minority Ethnic Equality and Inclusion Programme To facilitate partnership working on the inclusion and participation of new communities. This programme will build on this engagement and continue to support initiatives that seek to support the integration and inclusion of all Communities, through good relations related projects as well as supporting advice giving organisations.	£70,000	Somali Association project support	£300
BCC6	Safe Community	Interface Engagement Programme Work with a range of internal and external stakeholders to identify strategic projects that will: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. develop and deliver a city-wide initiative on anti-sectarianism and anti-racism to include other agencies and government 2. support progress towards the softening, transformation and/or removal of interface barriers. 	£70,000	EBCDA Consultation programme with Inner East Forum. 16 Christmas Interface events prog: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lower Oldpark Community Association - Greater Village Regeneration Trust - Forthspring Intercommunity Group - Duncairn Community Partnership - North Belfast Interface Network - TAHMI/Our Club, Our Community - Glenbank Community Association - Suffolk Events Circle - Shankill Women's Centre - Short Strand Community Forum - Southcity Resource and Development Centre - Suffolk Children's Project 	£3,000 £22,350

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Upper Springfield Development Trust - Suffolk Residents Association 	
					Total: £25,350
BCC7	Children & Young people	<p>Shared Education Schools Programme</p> <p>This initiative will be delivered in partnership with Education Authority and will focus on developing the Pupil Voice in Shared Education Partnerships.</p> <p>4 Post-Primary Shared Education Partnerships (220 pupils) will be recruited onto the programme.</p> <p>The purpose of the programme is to engage pupils from different communities in a range of Pupil Voice Programmes that seek to explore sensitive and controversial issues through a variety of engagement sessions.</p>	£20,000	<p>2 projects are being delivered:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Good Relations Week: Shared Education Day in the Crown Plaza Hotel on Thursday 16th October. 2. Pupil Voice Event: This will be delivered in February/ March 2026. Politics will deliver a programme of learning pupils and staff from post-primary settings in conversations relating to sensitive and controversial issues such as racism, hate crime, sectarianism, etc. 	<p>£0</p> <p>Total: £0</p>
BCC 8	All 4 themes – projects will be aligned to relevant theme	<p>Strategic Connections and Support Programme</p> <p>The aim of the Programme is to target resources through a Strategic Connections and Support Programme distributed on a themed basis for localised programmes, events and activities – across the City.</p>	£48,862.20	<p>10 year Girdwood Review</p> <p>Race Relations training and engagement by Tel Mama to be delivered in 2026.</p>	<p>£7,500</p> <p>£10,000</p> <p>Total: £17,500</p>
				Quarter 1 allocation	£271,990.67
				Quarter 2 allocation	£88,716.67
				Quarter 3 allocation	£65,350.66
				Quarter 4 allocation	
			£448,862.20	Total allocation	£426,058.00

The Acting Senior Good Relations Officer reported that an additional £47,000 was received from The Executive Office to fund projects which specifically addressed issues around racial tensions, and a further £12,700 was awarded in December, 2025 which would be allocated to the Beacons Programme. Those additional awards were 100% funded by The Executive Office and were reported on separately. This brought the total amount of available support for programmes to £508,562.20.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note the contents of the report.

Local Community Action Plan Secretariat Update

The Peace Programmes Manager provided the Partnership with an update on the mobilisation of the PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Action Plan.

She highlighted that a recent request from the Council to the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) for an advance of 20% was reduced to approximately 13%. This was based on expenditure to date, claims timeline and the level of Council reserves. She noted that the first advance payment of €1.5m had been received by the Council with the remaining €750k expected to be transferred once the first four claims had been submitted.

As delivery of the Local Community Action Plan had progressed, the need for flexibility and tolerances in relation to project targets and deliverables was identified, with several projects requesting to realign targets and payment schedules largely due to participant retention issues.

Members noted the detailed process for project flexibility and tolerances that had been developed with variances approved by the Project Manager, Programme Manager, Good Relations Manager or the PEACEPLUS Programme Board and those decisions reported back to the Shared City Partnership.

The newly developed tolerance and flexibility process would focus on:

- The realignment of participant targets within specific phases as outlined in the payments schedule;
- Participants per activity/cohort; and
- Community background percentage split targets.

The Peace Programmes Manager reported that following a number of resignations the Council's PEACEPLUS Team staffing structure was currently under review and that recruitment exercises would be undertaken once the review had been completed.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note the contents of the report.

Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update

The Partnership considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Shared City Partnership with a progress update on projects within the Thriving and Peaceful Communities (TPC) Theme of the PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Action Plan (LCAP).

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Project Delivery

An overview of project progress within the TPC theme is outlined below.

3.2 TPC 1 Community Empowerment – Lead Delivery Partner NICVA

Project Partners: Forward South Partnership (FSP), East Belfast Community Development Agency (EBCDA), West Belfast Partnership Board (WBPB), Falls Community Council (FCC), Greater Shankill Partnership (GSP) and Marrowbone Community Association (MCA).

Project delivery is continuing with the OCN Level 2 in Community Development course completed in November 2025 with 17 learners completing the course. The Course #2intake will begin in January 2026, running until end of April 2026 with 24 learners are registered. The first Citywide non accredited training session focussing on Facilitation Skills took place 11 December 2025 with 19 registered to attend.

Members are requested to note that the Programme Board agreed to a phased approach to the development of the Community Capacity Building Forum, aligned with the phased recruitment and development of the Local Community Empowerment Programmes (LCEPs), and to reduce the frequency of Forum meetings from bi-monthly to quarterly, on the basis there is no impact to contact hours.

Local Community Empowerment Plans (LCEPs) Stage 1: Baseline continues for LCEP 08 (Balmoral/Botanic, led by FSP) LCEP 09 (Lisnasharragh/Ormiston/Titanic, led by

EBCDA), LCEP 02 (Blackmountain, led by FCC), LCEP 04 (Court, led by FCC) and LCEP 01 (Court, led by GSP).

Technical issues aligning TPC1 M&E data to BCC's monitoring requirements are progressing.

3.3

TPC 2 Health & Wellbeing - Lead Delivery Partner Ashton
Project Partners: Shankill Partnership Board, East Belfast Community Development Agency, West Belfast Partnership Board, & North Belfast Community Partnership.

The Partnership is advised that change control process for Additional Facilitators as previously reported will no longer be progressing, as the Delivery Partner confirmed that the Healthy Living Centres, will be putting measures in place to increase their capacity to deliver the required project targets. On this basis delivery of activity can now commence, and a realigned implementation plan has been received to reflect an updated delivery timeframe.

The second change request to amend the membership target of the Programme Oversight Group (POG), and realign the targets into local activity targets, is ongoing and an update will be provided in due course.

TPC 3 Youth Empowerment, Inspiring Future Belfast

3.4

Lot 1: 9–12 year olds (Juniors) - Lead Delivery Partner Giga Training
Project Partner BEAM Creative Network.

Delivery of project activity for 2025 has been completed with 411 participants completing the project.

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) has been a key focus during this period to ensure the alignment of all data is accurate and fulfils the requirements to progress Phase 2b payment.

Planning for mobilising 2026 activity is progressing.

3.5

Lot 2: 12–15 year olds (Intermediate) - Lead Delivery Partner Active Communities Network (ACN)
Project Partners: Ledley Hall Boys & Girls Club, Lagmore and Rosario Youth.

Delivery of activity for Cohort 2 of 100 participants involving community groups and schools has been progressing. 40 participants in North; 15 in South; 25 in East and 20 in West Belfast. Community groups have completed single identity, and 3 twinning sessions and the schools' group has completed the personal identity session.

The Partnership should note that the proposal submitted by ACN to replace the cross border residential activity with a

day trip has been reverted to the Delivery Partner to outline how they will meet the tender specification requirement, their submission and the project requirement for cross border activity to be delivered as outlined in the action plan.

Members should also note that ACN has requested to realign their payment schedule to include completers only and remove registered and actively participating within the phase payments. The proposed realignment has been submitted with an updated implementation plan, and officers are currently reviewing the detail.

M&E training was provided by the PEACEPLUS team on 10 December 2025 with 2 ACN staff members attending, for both projects being delivered by ACN.

3.6 Lot 3: 16–18 year olds (Seniors) - Lead Delivery Partner Streetbeat Youth Project
Project Partner YEHA (Youth Educational Health Advice).

Final participant numbers for the first cohort have been confirmed as 41 young people registered and actively participating, from a target of 48 people

The Partnership is requested to note that the participant shortfall of 7 participants will be realigned to the next phase, increasing the target to be achieved to 79.

25 young people and 4 staff members travelled to Poland for the international residential. Feedback from the international residential has been positive, and the young people have become very supportive of each other, which would not have happened without PEACEPLUS.

3.7 Lot 4: 19-25 years olds (Young adults) – Lead Partner GEMS NI
Project Partners: Diverse Youth NI (DYNI), Training Network for Women (TWN).

The project launch event took place on 27 November 2025 attended by the Vice Chair of the Partnership. 26 participants are actively engaging in the project and have commenced ILM leadership training.

3.8 TPC 4 Sport for Peace - Lead Delivery Partner Active Communities Network
Project Partners: Sport Changes Life Foundation, PeacePlayers NI and Community Sports Network.

Pillar 1 coach education (16–18-year-olds) - 41 participants currently engaged from St Mary's Grammar School and Ulster University Belfast with 11 sessions completed to

date. Participants continue to complete the OCN qualification in Diversity at St Mary's and have progress to their First Aid training, which should be completed in December 2025. UUB participants continue to work towards their coaching and leadership training.

Pillar 2 sports sessions (11-16-year-olds) groups: 295 participants are currently engaged across 7 schools and 1 community project. 55 sessions have been completed across the following schools: Nettlefield PS (East), St Matthew's PS (East), Harding Memorial PS (East), St Anne's PS (East), Knockbreda School PS (East), Black Mountain School PS (West), St Joseph's School PS (West), Bridge n Divide (North).

Delivery of activities is centred on building confidence, leadership, and resilience through sport, delivered via both primary school and community-based sessions. Activities include: multisport e.g. basketball, rugby, football, netball, team games, groupwork, health and wellbeing exercises.

Pillar 3 (16-18 year olds) 2 participants are currently actively participating. NCB qualifications are due to be delivered January/February 2026. Participants are receiving mentoring, volunteering within local sports settings, and continuing to develop as emerging coaches.

Pillar 4 Research activity is ongoing, focusing on evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the programme across the 3 main engagement pillars and the consortium model.

Members are requested to note that ACN have requested to realign their payment schedule to include completers only and remove registered and actively participating within the phase payments. The proposed realignment has been submitted with an updated implementation plan, which is currently under review.

3.9 TPC 5 Employability Language Up – Lead Delivery Partner People1st

Project Partners: Belfast City Mission, Conway Education, Donegall Pass, Fane Street Primary, Food Stock, Footprints, Holy Rosary Primary, Mears, Refuge Language, Russian Speaking Community, Street Soccer NI, The Suitcase Project, Wee Chicks, Windsor Women's Centre.

Programme delivery has progressed steadily, with 14 active cohorts continuing to move through their sessions despite attendance challenges across several groups.

The Delivery Partner (DP) has actively managed these issues through follow-up and flexible scheduling, helping to

maintain momentum. Strong engagement remains evident in some cohorts, particularly those nearing completion.

The focus for the DP is supporting reengagement, completing outstanding Strand 2 activities, and ensuring each cohort remains on track against projected timelines and completing the required 36 hours across both strands. No new cohorts are due to commence until January 2026.

Members should note that a change request to realign targets, to help rectify a current and projected shortfall in achieved participant targets has now been approved. 271 participants have registered to date (exceeding the target of 225), and 33 participants have completed to date (exceeding the revised target of 27).

Engagement is city-wide, with particularly strong participation in South Belfast, and post attitudinal survey responses range from 72% - 100%, which exceeds the 70% threshold.

3.10 TPC 6 Arts Across the Genres – Delivery Partner Maywe
Project Partners: BEAM Creative Network

Project 1: Polyphonic

To date 39 participants are recruited with 27 actively participating. Capacity building sessions are continuing, with 8 sessions delivered for area groups in each of North, South, East.

Project 2: Creative Exchange

To date, 38 participants are recruited and actively participating in capacity building sessions. Work is ongoing to confirm the South Group and capacity building sessions have been postponed.

Project 5: Media Production

The project is fully recruited with 19 participants recruited of whom 16 are continuing to actively participate in skills sessions. Participants attended the Project 1 launch event on 6 November 2025 to capture footage for the documentary film and content for socials and newsletter.

Planning for the volunteer group is progressing with 4 participants from each of Project 1 and 2 to collaborate/assist in operations for festivals/ events over the period of their engagement.

Delays in achieving deliverables have impacted the issue of the payments. Members are requested to note that a realigned implementation plan to bring the project on track with the next phase targets and payment by March 2026 is

progressing. Officers have also been liaising with MayWe to resolve issue with M&E data.

Planning for the mentoring element is progressing with an open day event to take place in January 2026 with representatives from the creative arts and media sector to discuss career pathways with participants.

3.11 Financial and Resource Implications

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is eligible from 1 January 2024.

**3.12 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

The PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan has been screened for equality, good relations and rural needs assessment, and has been screened out.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note the contents of the report.

Celebrating Cultures and Diversity Thematic Update

The Partnership considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Shared City Partnership with a progress update on projects within the Celebrating Cultures and Diversity (CCD) Theme of the PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Action Plan (LCAP).

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Project Delivery

Projects are at various stages of implementation and an overview of project progress is outlined below.

3.2 CCD1 – Interfaith and Belief Lead Delivery Partner: Corrymeela Community Consortium Partners: Redeeming Our Communities, Belfast Islamic Centre, NI Inter-Faith Forum

Participants (49) are now registered across the steering groups for Stream 1, 2 and 3, although the project remains approximately 4 months behind schedule. Officers are continuing to work with the Delivery Partner to bring the project back on track.

Stream 1: Outreach Education element 1x co-design session completed during November 2025. Issues identified affecting the development of the youth awareness resources relate to buy-in from schools and youth organisations.

Stream 2: Welcoming Programme, a consultation on the draft online survey was complete on 3 December 2025. It is anticipated the online survey will be distributed from 5 – 31 January 2026. Plans for site visits and community showcases are progressing with locations being identified. The Delivery Partner estimates this element will be on track by February 2026.

Stream 3: Interfaith walking tour is now complete. A festival is planned to take place in January 2026 to mark Christmas as observed in Orthodox tradition and another festival on 1 February 2026 to celebrate St Brigid's Day.

3.3 CCD2 – Community Connections Lead Delivery Partner: GEMS NI
Consortium Partners: Business in the Community, Belfast City of Sanctuary, Diverse Youth NI, Migrant Centre NI, Ballynafeigh Community Development Association

Strand 1 Leadership & Mentoring sessions are progressing with 3 sessions having taken place. Other strands of the project are running slightly behind due to some recruitment and implementation delays. Members should note that one Cultural Facilitator cohort (Strand 2, Cohort 1) has been deemed ineligible as the community background does not meet the requirements for joint working. The delivery partner is liaising with their partners to rectify this, and delivery of this Strand has been paused until the cohort is compliant.

A revised timeframe for some of the delayed activity has been requested.

Strand 4 Welcome Hub Locations

Members are reminded that the project requires 3 Belfast Welcome Hubs to be established through council community spaces, and Morton was approved as a pilot location, pending a full proposal.

The Partnership is requested to note that the Programme Board considered the proposal for the 3 Community Connections Welcome Hubs as Morton, Horn Drive and Cregagh Community

Centres. It was noted there had been extensive engagement with Council officers regarding the locations and after consideration the Programme Board reverted the proposal to the delivery partner for further detail on the achievement of targets.

Concerns were also raised regarding potential risks of hate crime and racial motivated incidents, and the delivery partner has developed a risk management plan which is currently being reviewed.

- 3.4 **CCD 3 – LGBTQIA+ Community Engagement Project - Lead Delivery Partner: The Rainbow Project Project Partners: Cara Friend, HERe NI**

Social media platforms for the project are now live and generating connections and interest in the project. The first Strand 2 Strategic Planning session, with 11 participants, has been delivered, facilitated by Collaboration Ireland and a Belfast sector mapping exercise is ongoing. Strand 3 Research has also commenced, and 19 participants are registered under Strand 1 Coordination.

The change requests for the Strand 1 & 2 Steering Group & Strategic Planning Membership and realigned Implementation Plan/Gantt Chart and Payment Schedule are awaiting further information

- 3.5 **CCD4 – Community Empowerment Ex Politically Motivated Prisoners**
Lead Delivery Partner: Coiste na nlarchimí Project Partners: Tar Anall, Action for Community Transformation, Charter NI, and Tar Isteach

The contract initiation phase is progressing. Officers have been working closely with the Delivery Partner on the alignment of the condensed implementation plan with the payment schedule.

CCD5 From Multiculturalism to Interculturalism

- 3.6 **Lot 1 – Language and Cultural Access**
The re-issued tender closed on 8 December 2025 and submissions are currently being assessed.
- 3.7 **Lot 2 – Cultural Spaces (Come on Over) Lead Delivery Partner: MayWe**

The first Steering Group meeting took place on 20 November 2025 with members from 6 venues in attendance. The Group agreed the terms of reference, identified grassroots groups for the capacity building programmes, and discussed ideas for the

collaborative project. The next steering group meeting is scheduled for late January 2026 to finalise/ agree themes for training and confirm which grassroots groups will be involved.

Members are reminded that the cultural spaces now on board are:

- The MAC
- Banana Block
- Belfast Intercultural
- Romanian Community
- An Droichead
- Eastside Partnership- Templemore Baths
- St Comgall's
- Discover Ulster-Scots Centre
- An Chultúrlann

The project requirements include the involvement of Irish, and Ulster-Scots Learning Centres, Orange Halls and Ethnic Minority Centres. To date the Belfast Orange Hall, Clifton Street, Museum of Orange Heritage and NI War Memorial Museum have been approached without success. The Delivery Partner has requested support from Council in facilitating introductions with cultural spaces where there is a gap in uptake. The matter will also be discussed at the next CCD Thematic Steering Group in February 2026.

Members should note that the project will begin with a minimum of 6 cultural spaces, with 6 to be further recruited by end of Year 1, in agreement with Council. Officers are also evaluating other deliverables that can progress without all cultural spaces yet on board

A press release to mark the launch of the programme is to be released shortly and further programme comms to be set up including a webpage and social channels.

3.8 Lot 3 – Festivals and Flagship Events Lead Delivery Partner: Féile an Phobail

Delivery of the mentoring strand has progressed with two leadership development sessions focused on self-awareness and leading others. Further sessions to be delivered in 2026 include exploring digital change, managing harmful posts, and navigating online platforms; Other sessions will develop sector-wide leadership, influence, network-building and strengthen mentoring practice and collaboration.

A programme webpage, socials posts and press release were finalised for issue over November 2025 focusing on the launch of the mentoring strand. A full programme launch is being planned for February 2026.

Members are advised that the change request for participant number receiving OCN accreditation has been confirmed as 60

participants, reduced from 84. This was agreed on the basis that all training requirements will be met, and that the accreditation was not a requirement for the project.

3.9 Lot 4 – Culture and Shared Built Heritage - Lead Delivery
Partner: Arts Ekta
Project Partners: Cairde na Cille, Kabosh Theatre

OCN Level 2 Tour Guiding lessons will complete in January 2026 with a new intake due to begin in early 2026: 45 applications were received, and 11 places have been assigned, meeting the overall 20 participant target.

Members are advised that a change request to amend the delivery approach for the Faith-based Trail element to remove the augmented reality (AR) element of the project is under consideration via delegated authority to the PEACEPLUS Programme Manager and Good Relations Manager. Subject to meeting compliance requirements, the outcome will be reported to the Partnership in due course.

Tours delivery and the Burial Traditions Programme has completed for Year 1 and events delivery for Year 1 completed at the end of 2025 with a Victorian Heritage Weekend at Belmont Park and St Mark's Church over November 2025 and Christmas events in Riddell's Warehouse in December 2025. Year 2 concept planning for these strands is underway with project planning to be presented to BCC in the New Year for agreement.

Initial Faith-based Trail activity is now due to commence early 2026 with schools' educational trips to the faith centres to begin the story collection process, collecting oral histories, personal testimonies, and cultural narratives to then use for content development in the Spring 2026.

3.10 Financial and Resource Implications

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is eligible from 1 January 2024.

3.11 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment

The PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan has been screened for equality, good relations and rural needs assessment, and has been screened out.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note the contents of the report.

Community Regeneration and Transformation Thematic Update

The Partnership considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Shared City Partnership with an update on delivery of the Community Regeneration and Transformation Theme of the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan (LCAP).

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Capital and Animation Update

As previously reported, the design teams for all projects have been appointed.

3.2 CRT1: LGBTQIA+ Hub:

The site visit by the Design Team has been completed and M&E (Mechanical & Engineering) Assessments have been progressed.

Workshops with the Design Team and Community stakeholders on concept designs have been progressing, and detailed design phase will commence in January 2026.

Members are reminded that the legal status for tenant organisations is to be aligned closely with the animation element. Further discussions with legal on suitable options on a legal agreement will be progressed in early 2026.

3.3 CRT2: Annadale:

Designs, including the pitch are currently being worked up to planning stage. The tender play equipment list to inform design and play audit has been provided to the Design Team. Relevant surveys including topographical and underground utilities have been commissioned and ground boring for the surveys has been completed.

A stakeholder meeting took place on 17 November 2025 to introduce the Design Team and provide an update on project timelines. Key discussion points included:

- 1- Pitch funding –Council is actively seeking funding for the pitch and the pitch design will be part of the planning application.
- 2- Increased communication with the community, particularly those not attached to a community group.
- 3- Further discussions regarding the bonfire and construction timeline need to be considered.

The design and construction timeframes will inform the timeline and delivery of the animation programme and enable procurement to progress.

Procurement for preliminary animation activity (event management training) is being progressed, and it is envisaged a supplier to be in place to begin delivery in February 2026.

3.4 CRT3: Distillery Street:

Design discussions are progressing with the stakeholders and design team. As previously reported, procurement for animation will be progressed early January 2026 with delivery commencing in May 2026.

3.5 CRT4: Access to the Hills:

Members are reminded that following a site visit, the potential requirement for a major planning application was highlighted as a significant risk to project delivery. Discussions and scoping of the routes are ongoing, and the possibility of a phased approach is being considered, similar to Forth Meadow Community Greenway.

The Steering Group meeting with the Design Team took place on 26 November 2025 and discussions included the route and proposed design and exploring a route through Ligoniel Dams as an alternative to the northern Ligoniel/Wolfhill Rd, as it could be potentially safer. Topographical surveys for specific sections were carried out in December 2025 and liaison with Nature Towns & Cities Funding project is also to be considered.

Procurement for animation activity is expected to progress in January 2026. Updated timeframes for design and construction will be included in the tender documents for the animation programme.

3.6 CRT5: Sanctuary Theatre:

As previously noted, no planning is required for the Sanctuary Theatre capital works.

Procurement for the animation element of the project has commenced with the tender opening on Tuesday 2 December 2025, closing on Monday 12 January 2026 and the contract award anticipated for March 2026.

3.7 Governance update

The Programme Manager continues to liaise with the Programme Delivery Manager to progress the actions from the Capital Project Board, which are summarised as follows:

- correspondence should be issued to SEUPB (from Director of Neighbourhood Services) regarding representation of SEUPB and CPD on the Capital Project Board.
- the governance model should be reviewed and representation to include relevant CNS officers, and that the approval process is clearly outlined.
- Lines to take should be developed for each project.
- Site visit for the Board.

The next Capital Project Board meeting is to be arranged for mid-January 2026.

3.8 Financial and Resource Implications

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is eligible from 1 January 2024.

3.9 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

The PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan has been screened for equality, good relations and rural needs assessment, and has been screened out.

The Peace Programmes Manager reminded Members that the proposed budgets had been submitted to SEUPB three years ago and confirmed that any potential savings from the use of Council property rather than private land in the Access to the Hills project would likely need to be realigned to cover any shortfall due to price increases since then.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note the contents of the report.

Good Relations Audit, Strategy and Action Plan Workshop

Mr. Osbourne presented an overview of the Draft Good Relations Strategy, the Draft Good Relations Audit and the Draft 2026/2027 Good Relations Action Plan to the Partnership.

Following discussion, the Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they also note the

contents of the report, agreed the contents of the new Good Relations Audit and 2026/2027 Good Relations Action Plan for issue to The Executive Office, and approved the Good Relations Strategy to undergo a public consultation exercise via the Council's Your Say Platform. It was also agreed that the Partnership would hold a further consultation session on 4th February to further consider the Draft Good Relations Strategy.

Date of Next Meeting

The Partnership was reminded that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Monday 9th February.

Chairperson

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Belfast PEACEPLUS

Priority 1.1 Local Community
Peace Action Plan

Programme Board

Report

As of

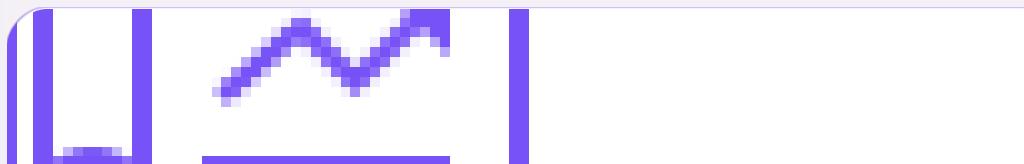
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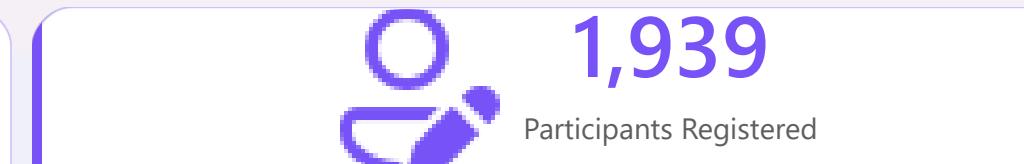
Belfast
City Council

The Belfast Local Community Action Plan is supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

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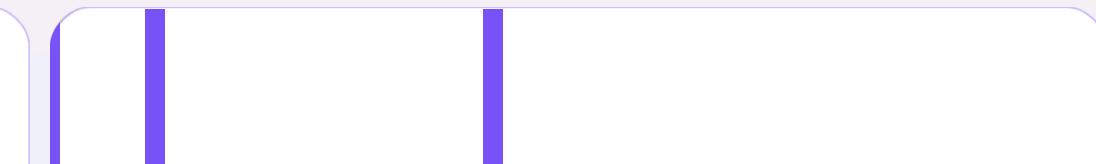


Number of projects with activities added: 13



Participants registered this month: 9 92% (-97) vs. last month

Participants last month: 106



Participant Registrations

Last 6 Months

● Monthly Registrations ◆ Total Participants (Cumulative)



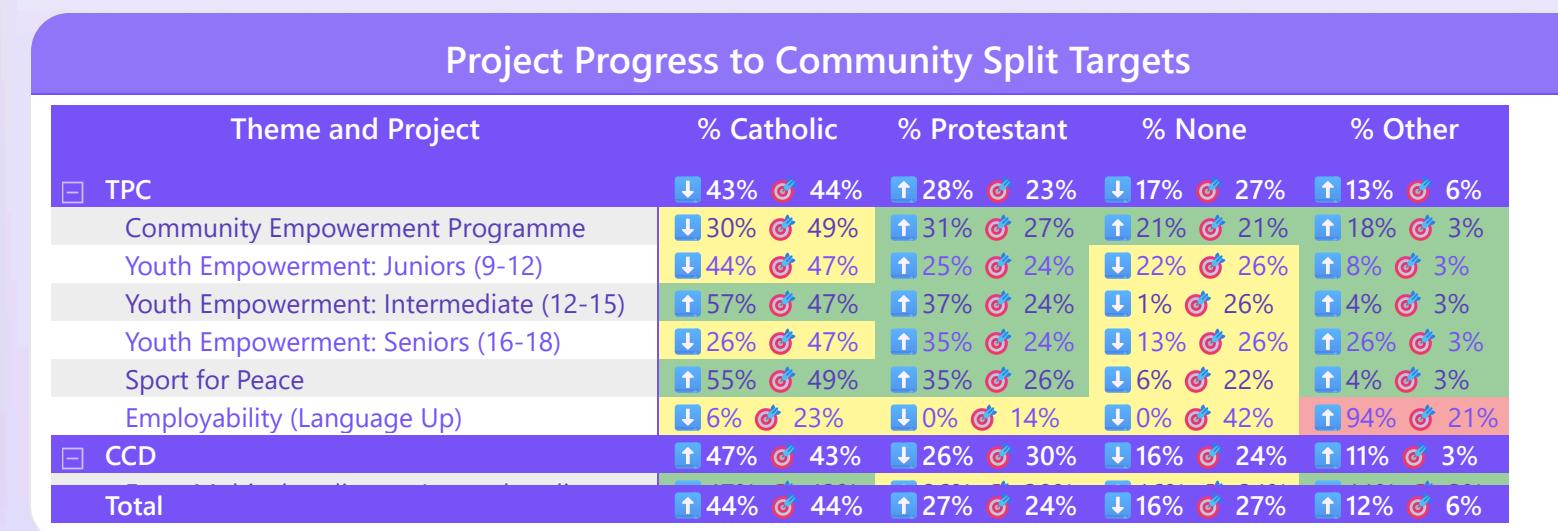
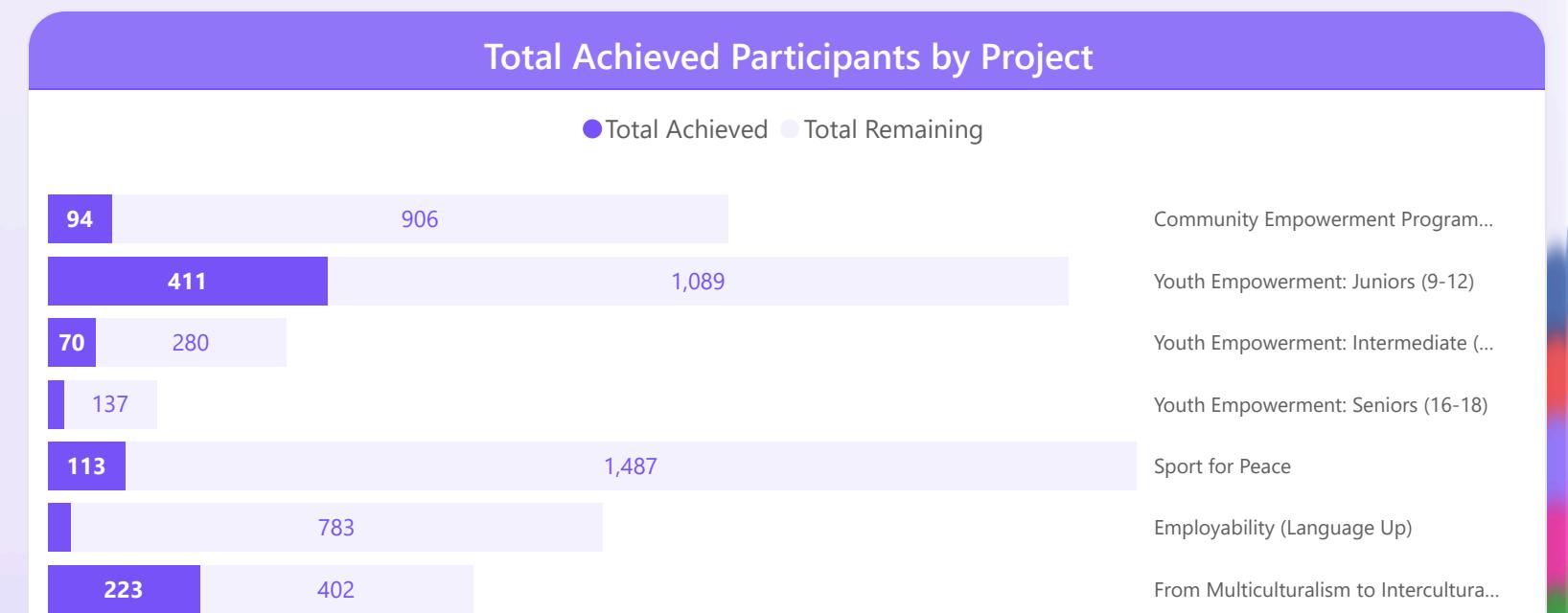
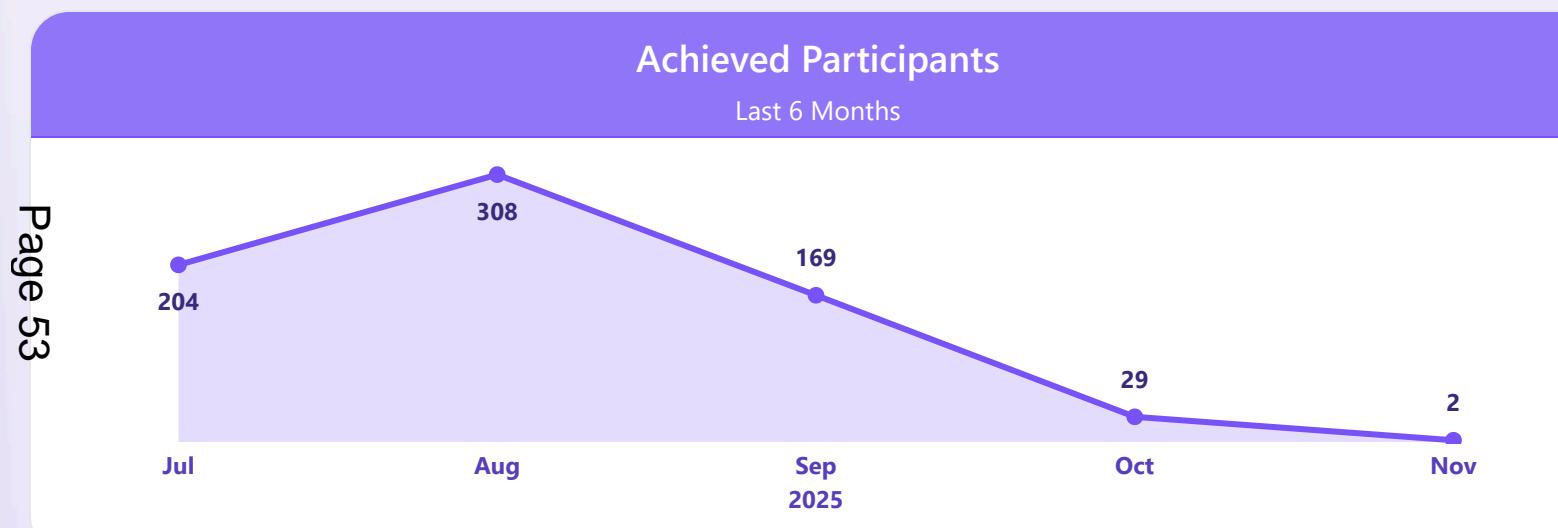
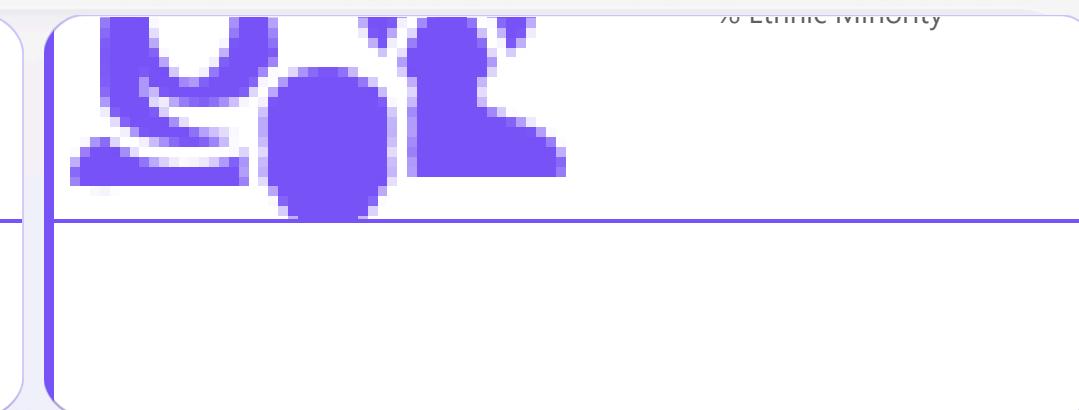
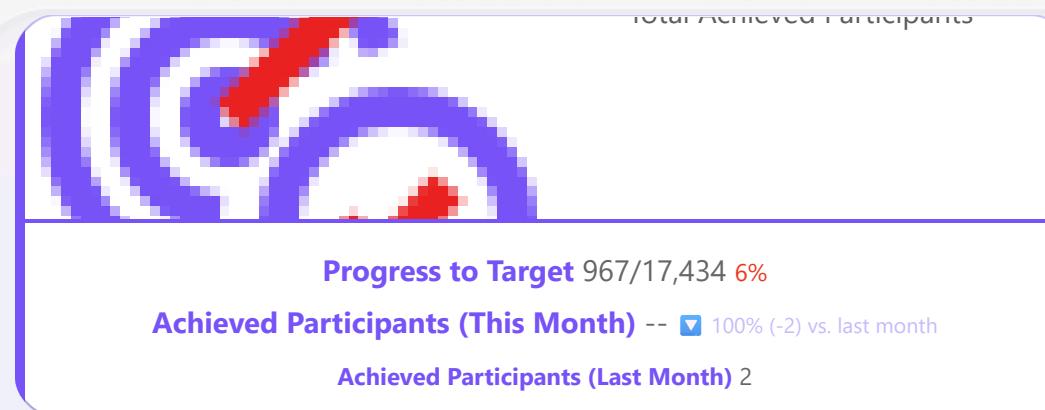
Total Participants by Project

Theme and Project	Total Participants	Non-Participating
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TPC	1,566	160
Community Empowerment Programme	109	
Youth Empowerment: Juniors (9-12)	540	115
Youth Empowerment: Intermediate (12-15)	87	2
Youth Empowerment: Seniors (16-18)	64	5
Youth Empowerment: Young Adults (19-25)	9	9
Sport for Peace	390	5
Employability (Language Up)	271	9
Arts Across the Genres	96	15
CCD	373	22
Interfaith and Belief Programme	53	8
Total	1,939	182

Project Activity Tracker

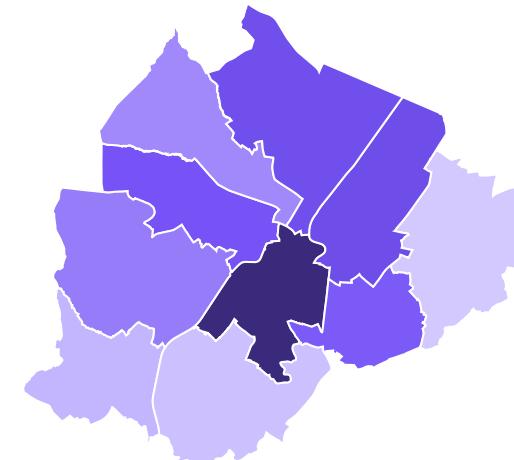
Theme Abbv	Times Activity Held	Total Unique Participants
TPC	414	1416
Community Empowerment Programme	9	118
Youth Empowerment: Juniors (9-12)	49	425
Junior (9-12 year old) Activity	49	425
Youth Empowerment: Intermediate (12-15)	29	85
Intermediate (12-15 year old) - Social Action Learning Activity	1	23
Intermediate (12-15 year old) Activity	27	85
Intermediate (12-15 year old) Social Action Learning Activity	1	1
Youth Empowerment: Seniors (16-18)	70	59
Seniors (16-18 year old) Activity (International Residential)	2	17
Seniors (16-18 year old) Activity (Non-Residential)	68	59
Sport for Peace	130	386
Pillar 1: Qualification/Coach Education	34	80
Pillar 2: Participation	96	313
Employability (Language Up)	106	262
Strand 1: Community Provision of Flexible Language Courses	74	261
Strand 2: Community Programme of Activities (including co-design process)	32	164
Arts Across the Genres	21	81
CCD	62	350
Total	477	1775



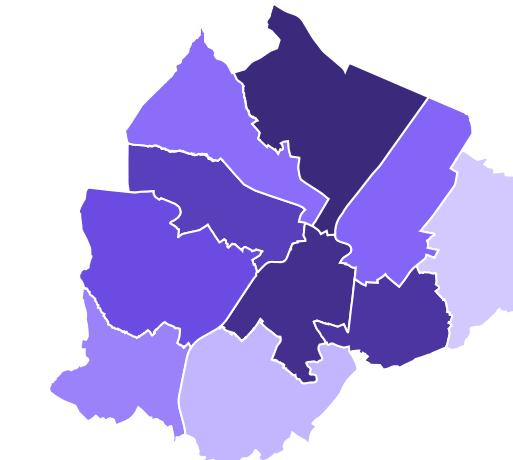
Theme and Project	Total Achieved	Total Remaining	Project Target	%
TPC	744	4,682	5,426	14%
Community Empowerment Programme	94	906	1,000	9%
Youth Empowerment: Juniors (9-12)	411	1,089	1,500	27%
Youth Empowerment: Intermediate (12-15)	70	280	350	20%
Youth Empowerment: Seniors (16-18)	23	137	160	14%
Total	967	5,084	6,051	16%

All Participants Heatmap

by DEA

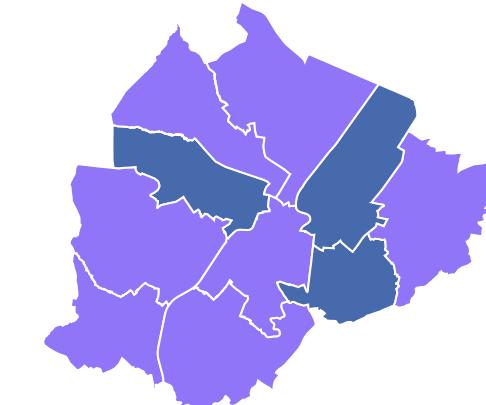

Achieved Participants Heatmap

by DEA


Most Represented Religious Beliefs by DEA

Achieved Participants

● Catholic ● Protestant



City Region & DEA	Total Participants	% Total
North Belfast	374	19%
Castle	222	11%
Oldpark	152	8%
South Belfast	433	22%
Balmoral	93	5%
Botanic	340	18%
East Belfast	512	26%
Lisnasharragh	203	10%
Ormiston	83	4%
Titanic	226	12%
West Belfast	481	25%
Black Mountain	166	9%
Collin	105	5%
Court	210	11%
Outside Council District	139	7%
Total	1,939	100%

City Region & DEA	Total Participants	% Total
North Belfast	199	21%
Castle	125	13%
Oldpark	74	8%
South Belfast	168	17%
Balmoral	49	5%
Botanic	119	12%
East Belfast	232	24%
Lisnasharragh	113	12%
Ormiston	42	4%
Titanic	77	8%
West Belfast	261	27%
Black Mountain	91	9%
Collin	67	7%
Court	103	11%
Outside Council District	107	11%
Total	967	100%

City Region & DEA	Top Religious Belief	Count
North Belfast	Catholic	106
Castle	Catholic	59
Oldpark	Catholic	47
South Belfast	Catholic	63
Balmoral	Catholic	19
Botanic	Catholic	44
East Belfast	Protestant	84
Lisnasharragh	Protestant	41
Ormiston	Catholic	16
Titanic	Protestant	27
West Belfast	Catholic	155
Black Mountain	Catholic	76
Collin	Catholic	52
Court	Protestant	66
Outside Council District	Catholic	35
Total	Catholic	425



693

Number of projects with surveys added: 5



34%



72%

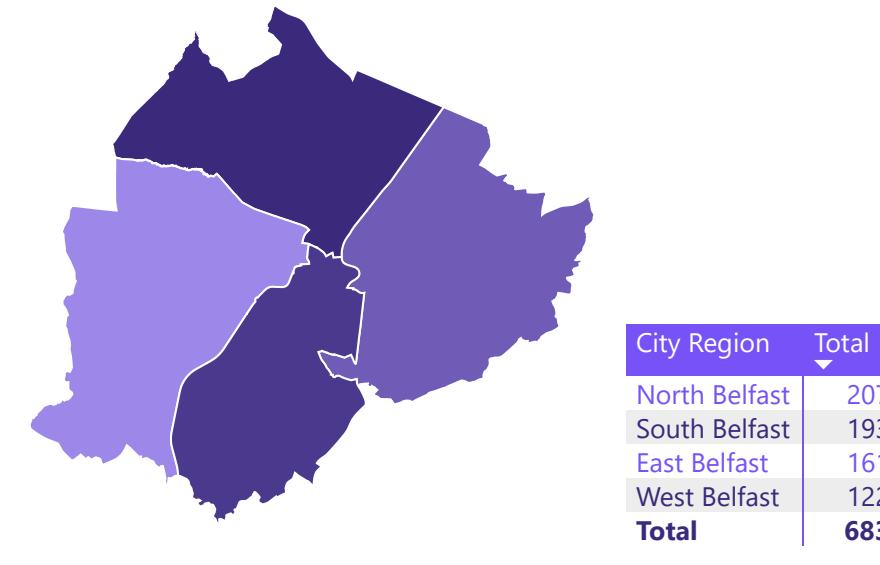


11%

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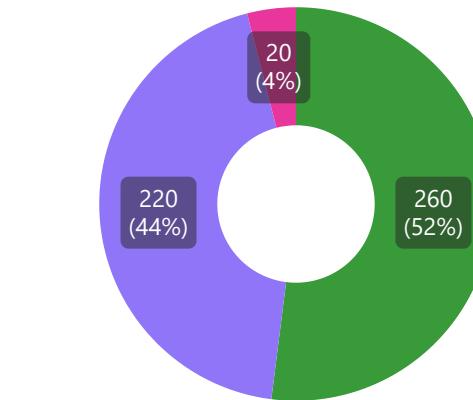
Belfast Region Heatmap

Equality Monitoring Respondents

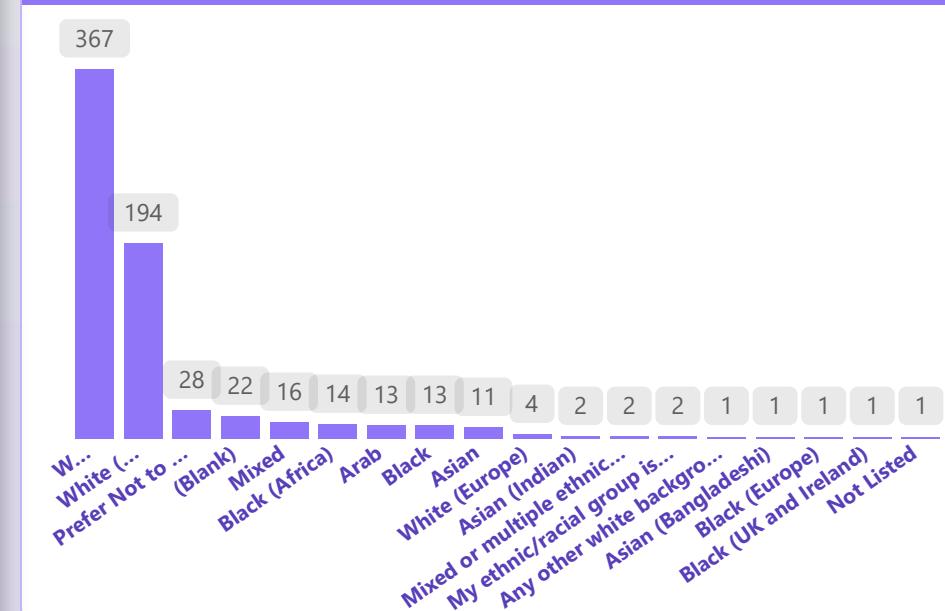


Total Respondents by Gender

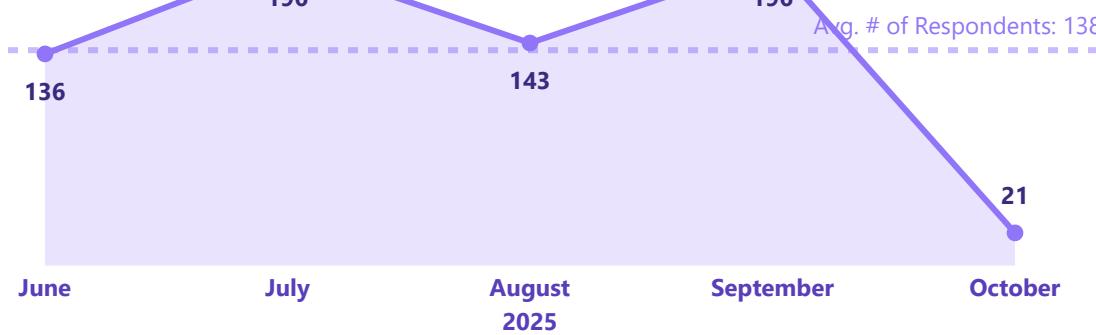
Participants over 18



Total Respondents by ethnic group/ethnicity

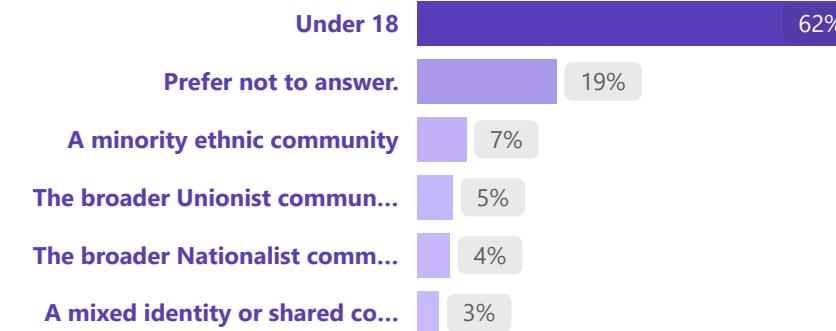


Respondents over Time



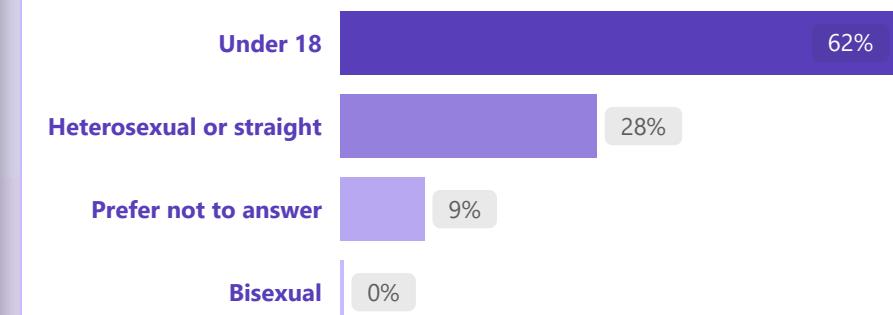
Total Respondents by Political Opinion

Participants over 18



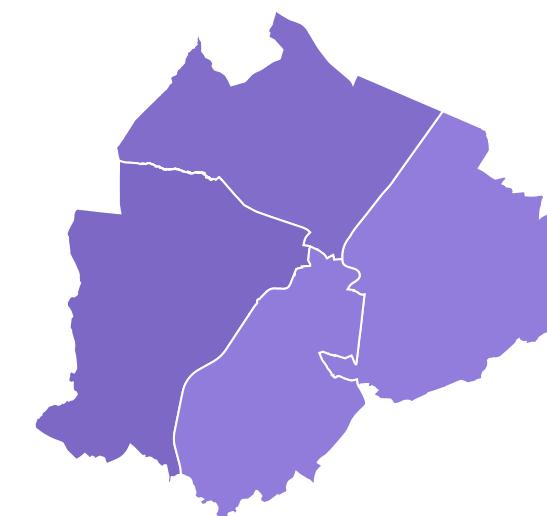
Total Respondents by Sexual Orientation

Participants over 18



Belfast Region Heatmap

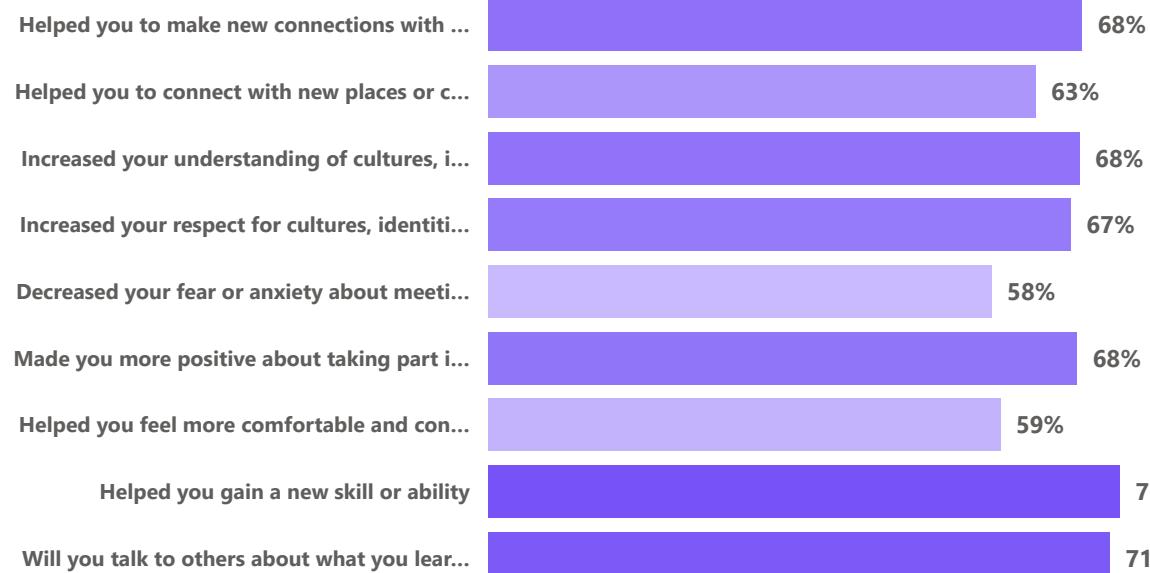
by Positive Response Rate



City Region	% Positive Responses
North Belfast	69%
South Belfast	62%
East Belfast	62%
West Belfast	71%
Total	66%

Positive Responses per Question

Positive Responses = Agree, Strongly Agree or Yes



Question Response Gauge

● Strongly Agree ● Agree ● Neutral ● Disagree ● Strongly Disagree ● Yes ● No ● Prefer not to answer

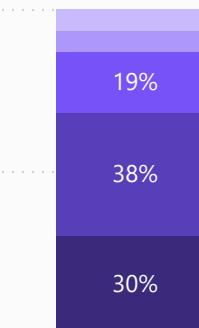
Helped you to make new connections with those from different identities



Helped you to connect with new places or communities



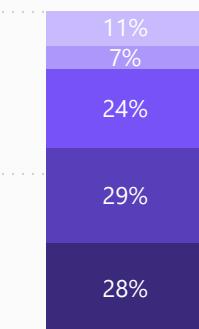
Increased your understanding of cultures, identities, or opinions different to your own



Increased your respect for cultures, identities, or opinions different to your own



Decreased your fear or anxiety about meeting others from a culture, identity, or opinion different to your own



Made you more positive about taking part in peace, cross-community, or cross-border work



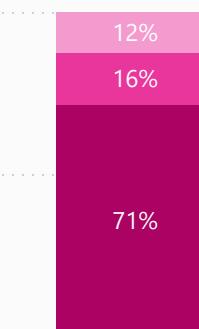
Helped you feel more comfortable and confident in addressing issues within your local community or increased your understanding of issues impacting your community



Helped you gain a new skill or ability

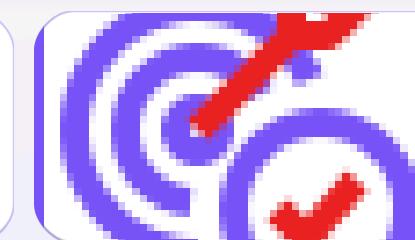


Will you talk to others about what you learned?

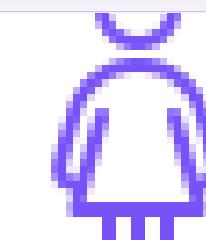


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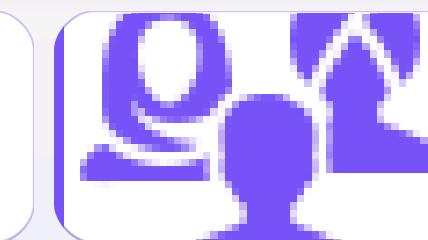
Total Participants (All)


155

Total Achieved Participants


50%

% Woman or Girl...


12%

% Ethnic Minority

Participant Registrations

Last 6 Months

● Monthly Registrations ◆ Total Participants (Cumulative)

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Total Participants by Project

Theme and Project	Total Participants	Non-Participating
TPC		
Community Empowerment Programme	12	25
Youth Empowerment: Juniors (9-12)	82	15
Youth Empowerment: Intermediate (12-15)	7	1
Youth Empowerment: Seniors (16-18)	7	
Youth Empowerment: Young Adults (19-25)	5	5
Sport for Peace	43	
Employability (Language Up)	18	1
Arts Across the Genres	49	3
CCD		
Interfaith and Belief Programme	3	27
Total	272	27

Project Activity Tracker

Theme Abbv	Times Activity Held	Total Unique Participants
TPC	283	198
Community Empowerment Programme	9	12
Youth Empowerment: Juniors (9-12)	48	67
Junior (9-12 year old) Activity	48	67
Youth Empowerment: Intermediate (12-15)	26	6
Intermediate (12-15 year old) Activity	25	6
Intermediate (12-15 year old) Social Action Learning Activity	1	1
Youth Empowerment: Seniors (16-18)	49	7
Seniors (16-18 year old) Activity (International Residential)	1	1
Seniors (16-18 year old) Activity (Non-Residential)	48	7
Sport for Peace	88	43
Pillar 1: Qualification/Coach Education	28	10
Pillar 2: Participation	60	35
Employability (Language Up)	48	17
Strand 1: Community Provision of Flexible Language Courses	37	17
Strand 2: Community Programme of Activities (including co-design process)	11	12
Arts Across the Genres	15	46
CCD	29	47
Interfaith and Belief Programme	4	2
Total	312	245

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Appendix III - Process for Project Tolerances

Introduction

This Process for Project Tolerances aims to provide a small level of flexibility in relation to realignment of targets that are close to being met but were not, for circumstances outside of the control of the delivery partner. An example of this is where a cohort has a target of 28 contact hours, and the participant has achieved 26, it would be reasonable to allow the participant to be agreed as achieved as they would have had significant contact with people from another community and would have met the minimum contact hours outlined in the application form (usually between 3 and 12 hours) and as per Programme Guidelines.

This process outlines a small level of flexibility allowed for each of the projects in variances between the target and achieved, it also allows for quicker decisions to be taken within agreed parameters, allow for some level of flexibility and a reasonable approach where minor adjustments can lead to positive outcomes and achievement of targets.

- participants within particular phase as outlined in the payment schedule
- participants per activity / cohort
- community background percentage split targets
- KPIs

SEUPB Requirements

The approved Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan application form on JEMS and the Action Plan submitted to the SEUPB forms part of the Letter of Offer. Each project is listed on JEMS as an activity, along with key deliverables. Project targets vary between projects but generally include;

- Overall project participant numbers
- Participant target per activity / cohort
- Overall minimum & maximum contact hours
- Target hours for specific activities
- Community Background %age splits (based on census data for that area / age group / all of Belfast depending upon the type of activity)

SEUPB advised that attrition rates for participant contact hours were not permitted within the call document and as such participants must complete the required contact hours. However, it was noted that minimum and maximum participant contact hours for each project was outlined in Council's application. On this basis, Council has a degree of flexibility for participant contact hours and SEUPB advised that Council should manage the tolerances in line with the application and internal procedures

The targets for each theme and project are outlined in the tables in Appendix 2 at the end of this paper and subsequently forms part of the contract with delivery partners for those projects that have been awarded to date.



Potential for tolerance allowances

Participant numbers

Council is contractually obligated to achieve the 17,437 participants as outlined in the Action Plan and Letter of Offer. The participant numbers are split across all projects as outlined in Appendix 2 of this process.

Each delivery partner has an agreed payment schedule with phased payments. An example payment schedule is included at Appendix 2. Phases include completion of different deliverables and have a breakdown of participant targets which are split across key milestones for each project. Each delivery partner detailed how participant attrition would be managed as part of their tender response. As referred above, the achievement of key milestones, including participant targets, form part of the payment schedule. An example may include;

- Overall participant target = 1,000
- Phase 1a actively participating = 100
- Phase 1b completed participants = 100 and actively participating = 200
- Phase 2a completed participants = 200 (300 cumulative) and actively participating = 200

And so on until all 1,000 participants can be deemed as having been achieved.

It is recognised that, in some cases, participants may drop out part way through or take longer to achieve the required level of contact hours than originally envisaged. It may not be possible for projects to 'catch up' within that particular agreed phase but rather roll forward some participant numbers into the next phase.

It is therefore reasonable for realignment of participant milestones, applying a tolerance within each delivery phase.

Recommended tolerances

It is proposed that by realigning targets to other phases of the payment schedule;

- Project Managers can consider and agree realignment of up to 20% of the target for a particular phase
- The PEACE Programme Manager and Good Relations Manager can consider and agree realignment of up to 30% of the target for a particular phase
- The Programme Board can consider and agree realignment of targets over 30%

Any remaining targets relating to that particular phase can be rolled forward to a future phase. In the example above, should 90 participants have completed in Phase 1b, the Project Manager can consider and agree that 10 participants that did not complete will be rolled forward to Phase 2a and the target increased to 210. The cumulative figure would remain as 300 and this same methodology can be applied for up to 20% and over 20%.

Project Managers will then work with delivery partners to ensure sufficient participants are recruited to ensure the overall target of 1,000 is met.

Contact hours

The minimum contact hours, and maximum hours for each project are listed in Appendix 1. The minimum hours for each project must be achieved for a participant to be counted.



It should be noted that within some projects, individual activities have specific contact hour requirements, eg. the TPC3 Lot 4 Youth Empowerment Project where young people are to reach a target of 100 hours if they engage in a Residential whilst the minimum hours across the project is 12. In the event that the participant completes 90 hours, they have clearly met the minimum 12 contact hours., whilst achieving the transformative outcomes.

It is therefore reasonable to allow a tolerance for each cohort / activity providing the participant has met the minimum requirement as listed in the tables in Appendix 1. This should be on the same basis as outlined in the bullet points above.

Community background targets

Whilst the overall community background targets for each project cannot be amended without prior written approval by the SEUPB via a modification request, there may be some flexibility within a particular cohort within an overall project. Advice was provided to all delivery partners which outlined a condition within the Letter of Offer;

“the community background of each of the Cohorts of participants should be confirmed and not vary from that set out in the application”.

SEUPB provided clarity that a ‘cohort’ in this case is an individual project within the plan (listed as an activity in JEMS)

Delivery partners were reminded that the clause is applicable to the project they are delivering, as such adherence to the following is required:

- All approved PEACEPLUS project activity **must involve cross community participation.**
- Delivery partners should aim to **achieve the cross community split**, as reflected in the tender specification, **within each participating cohort/group.**
- Any divergence from the cross community split within cohorts/groups of participants should be agreed by the Council

Delivery partners were also reminded that **single identity activities**, which do not incorporate any cross-community and / or cross-border dimension **are ineligible**, unless previously agreed by Council and the SEUPB.

On this basis, **project activity at a cohort/group level MUST include those from a different community background** to ensure eligibility of activity.

Therefore, delivery partners are encouraged to ensure every element of delivery of the groups / cohorts is based on the community background percentage splits listed within the tender documents for their specific project.

In many cases, it will not be possible to exactly meet these targets, therefore a level of tolerance is reasonable within a particular activity / event / element of a project as long as the overall target is met.

Community Background targets are listed in the tables in Appendix 2.

It is recommended that;



**Belfast
City Council**

*The Belfast Local Community Action Plan is supported
by PEACEPLUS, a Programme managed by the Special
EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)*

Page 6



- Project Managers can consider and agree variances up to 10% (higher or lower) against each listed community background
- The PEACE Programme Manager and Good Relations Manager can consider and agree variances 20% (higher or lower) against each listed community background
- The Programme Board can consider and agree variances over 20% against each listed community background

It should be noted that as per the KPIs listed in Appendix 3, at least 40% of participants have different religious belief, ethnic or racial group across the project as a whole.

Any impacts the variances per cohort have on the overall project target should be considered prior to approval.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The KPIs, which focus on the impact and attitudinal change of project activity, were included within the overall Action Plan and at project-by-project level as laid out in Appendix 3;

KPI data is collated via surveys completed by participants after they have completed their activities. Each delivery partner is responsible for submitting the survey data via the databases held in SharePoint which is analysed within Power BI.

Delivery partners are requested to encourage participants to complete the surveys, however it should be noted that to adhere with GDPR and Data Protection regulations, the surveys are not compulsory, a high number of responses are therefore expected. Where insufficient responses (either by number or satisfaction levels) are received, delivery partners will be requested to facilitate completion with participants to ensure a higher return.

With the exception of the number of participants achieved, and the different communities engaged, all KPIs have a target of 70% positive responses. Where the Project Managers, Programme Support Assistants or Monitoring Data Analyst identify that projects are falling short of the target, this will be highlighted to the delivery partners who will be asked to provide further details and to find ways to improve, either by increasing response rates, or analysing activities and making improvements to content, with the aim of increasing satisfaction levels.

As the KPIs are listed in the application form as approved by the SEUPB steering committee, it is not possible to vary these targets without a modification, KPIs should therefore be delivered in line with the Action Plan.

Management and agreement of tolerances

This process is to be considered and agreed by the PEACEPLUS Programme Board. In the case of small variances of achievement versus targets relating to a particular phased payment, it is recommended that variances are approved by the Project Manager, Programme Manager / Good Relations Manager, or the Programme Board as outlined above. This will ensure payments can be made in a timely fashion. If necessary the Change Control process will be implemented (i.e. for large variances / tolerances or where a significant change is identified as a result of the agreed tolerances). Any reduction in targets over 10% to allow release of payments should also see a comparable reduction in the payment being made for that particular phase. In all cases, the missed targets should be re-aligned in the workplan / payment schedule to ensure targets are met in future phases and



payment schedules updated to ensure percentage payments are made broadly in line with percentage achievement.

In the first instance, delivery partners should request in writing via the change request template the tolerance they wish to pursue along with a rationale outlining the impact on delivery. This should include the;

- original target
- proposed updated target
- percentage tolerance requested
- written narrative detailing the reason for the request
- the impact on delivery of the remaining target
 - Payment schedules = a re-profile of the payment schedule showing when the project will deliver the participant numbers needed to release future phased payments
 - Participants per cohort = if a cohort participant target is reduced, which cohort will pick up the additional numbers to ensure the overall participant target is met
 - Community Background percentage target variances (by cohort) = how will the project ensure the overall targets are not impacted
 - KPIs = what actions will the delivery partner undertake to increase the number of responses and / or the satisfaction levels
- Where the tolerance is approved by the Project Manager, written notification of the agreed updated targets
- Where the tolerance is approved by the Programme Manager / Good Relations Manager / Programme Board, recommendation made by the Project Manager and written approval from the relevant approver
- Any approved amendments are then to be tracked via;
 - Change Control tracker
 - Updated payment schedules
 - Updated Payment Request Form (M&E sign off against the updated targets, notification to Finance and Claims Officer at time of payment)



Appendix 1 – example payment schedule

Phased Payments	Phased Payments in line with payment schedule	%
1	Appointment of external provider/s Project content / key milestones agreed reporting mechanisms and measures agreed Attendance at project initiation submission of signed contract	10%
2a	Year 1 Delivery of all agreed deliverables for phase 2a Culture & Built Heritage SG established & convening 40 Participants engaged and participating Year 1 progress and submission of all required M&E data Adherence to reporting & governance requirements	5%
2b	Year 1 Delivery of all agreed deliverables for Phase 2b 186 Cumulative participants engaged and participating Year 1 participation submission of all required M&E data Adherence to reporting & governance requirements	10%
3a	Year 2 Delivery of all agreed deliverables for Phase 3a Cumulative 186 completed participants Further 146 engaged and participating (cumulative 332) Year 2 participant submission of all required M&E data Adherence to reporting and governance requirements	10%
3b	Year 2 Delivery of all agreed deliverables for Phase 3b Cumulative 332 completed Further 146 engaged and participating (cumulative 478) Year 2 participation submission of all required M&E data Adherence to reporting and governance requirements	20%
4a	Year 3 Delivery of all agreed deliverables for Phase 4a Cumulative 468 participants complete Further 157 participating (cumulative 625) Year 3 participation submission of all required M&E data Adherence to reporting and governance requirements	5%
4b	Year 3	10%



	<p>Deliver of all agreed deliverables for Phase 4b</p> <p>Final total of 625 completed participants</p> <p>(including Culture & Built Heritage SG 30 months engagement)</p> <p>1250 wider participants and beneficiaries completed</p> <p>Year 3 participation submission of all required M&E data</p> <p>Adherence to reporting and governance requirements</p>	
5	<p>End of Year 3</p> <p>Final achievement of agreed targets</p> <p>Submission of all required M&E data</p> <p>Adherence to closure requirements including submission of final reports and evaluations</p>	10%



Appendix 2 – Project Specific Targets

Community Regeneration & Transformation – Animation

Ref.	Project Name	Participants	Min Contact Hrs	Max Contact Hrs	Community Background % splits
CRT1	LGBTQIA+ Hub	470	8	20	43% catholic, 30% protestant, 3% other religions, 24% no religion
CRT2	Annadale Open Space	783	10	36	36% Catholic, 30% Protestant, 5% other religions, 29% no religion
CRT3	Distillery Street	730	10	40	46% Catholic, 26% Protestant, 4% other religions 24% no religion
CRT4	Access to the Hills	1,200	8	18	42% Catholic, 37% Protestant, 2% Other religions 19% no religion
CRT5	Sanctuary Theatre	1080	3	18	29% Catholic, 36% Protestant, 4% Other religions 29% no religion

Thriving and Peaceful Communities

Ref.	Project Name	Participants	Min Contact Hrs	Max Contact Hrs	Community Background % splits
TPC1	Community Empowerment	1,000	6	30	49% Catholic, 27% Protestant, 3% other religions 21% no religion
TPC2	Health & Wellbeing	1,620	6	30	56% Catholic, 24% Protestant, 2% other religions 18% no religion
TPC3:1	Youth Empowerment: 9-12 yrs old	1,500	12	100	47% Catholic, 24% Protestant, 3% other religions 26% no religion
TPC3:2	Youth Empowerment: 12-15 yrs old	350	12	100	47% Catholic, 24% Protestant, 3% other religions 26% no religion
TPC3:3	Youth Empowerment: 16-18 yrs old	160	12	100	47% Catholic, 24% Protestant, 3% other religions 26% no religion
TPC3:4	Youth Empowerment 19-25 yrs old	96	12	100	47% Catholic, 24% Protestant, 3% other religions 26% no religion
TPC4	Sport for Peace	1,600	6	72	49% Catholic, 26% Protestant, 3% other religions 22% no religion



TPC5	Employability Language Up	816	12	36	23% Catholic, 14% Protestant, 21% other religions 42% no religion
TPC6	Arts Across the Genres	496	8	36	43% Catholic, 30% Protestant, 3% other religions 24% no religion

Celebrating Culture and Diversity

Ref.	Project Name	Participants	Min Contact Hrs	Max Contact Hrs	Community Background % splits
CCD1	Interfaith and Belief	870	6	24	43% Catholic, 30% Protestant, 3% other religions 24% no religion
CCD2	Community Connections – Ethnic Minority Communities	726	8	50	43% Catholic, 30% Protestant, 3% other religions 24% no religion
CCD3	LGBTQIA+ Community Engagement	625	6	30	43% Catholic, 30% Protestant, 3% other religions 24% no religion
CCD4	Ex-Politically Motivated Prisoners	750	6	24	43% Catholic, 30% Protestant, 3% other religions 24% no religion
CCD5:1	Multiculturalism to Interculturalism Strand 1	1,110	8	30	43% Catholic, 30% Protestant, 3% other religions 24% no religion
CCD5:2	Multiculturalism to Interculturalism Strand 2	426	8	30	43% Catholic, 30% Protestant, 3% other religions 24% no religion
CCD5:3	Multiculturalism to Interculturalism Strand 3	404	8	30	43% Catholic, 30% Protestant, 3% other religions 24% no religion
CCD5:4	Multiculturalism to Interculturalism Strand 4	625	8	30	43% Catholic, 30% Protestant, 3% other religions 24% no religion



Appendix 3 – PEACEPLUS KPI's

Result Indicator	Indicator Measure	How	When
People from different communities jointly engaged in the implementation of local action plans	Number of participants engaged in the project and associated work packages/strands (total 17,437, broken down as per tables above)	Registration of participants and ongoing project activity	As part of registration process
Meaningful and Purposeful contact	70% of participants indicating they have built relationships with people from different communities.	Via survey response to question <i>'Has participation in this project helped you to make new friends/connections with those from different identities?'</i>	On completion of activity
Increased level of social inclusion and integration	70% of participants showing the project helped them to connect with new places/ communities	Via survey response to question <i>'Has this project helped you to connect with new places or communities?'</i>	On completion of activity
Transformation Experience	70% of participants indicating they have increased understanding of other cultures/ identities	Via survey response to question <i>'Has this project increased your understanding of cultures, identities, or opinions different to your own?'</i>	On completion of activity
	70% of participants indicating they have increased respect for other cultures/ identities	Via survey response to question <i>'Has this project increased your respect for cultures, identities, or opinions different to your own?'</i>	On completion of activity
Significant Attitudinal and behavioural change	70% of participants having a positive attitude to peacebuilding and cross community/cross border work	Via survey response to question <i>'Has this project made you more positive about taking part in peace, cross-community or cross-border work?'</i>	On completion of activity
	70% of participants having shared their learning with others.	Via survey response to question <i>'Will you/ have you talked with other people about what you have learned?'</i>	On completion of activity



Different Communities	40% of participants have different religious belief, ethnic or racial group	Via equality surveys monitoring Gender, Age, Community Background /Religion, Sexual Orientation, Disability.	On commencement of activity.
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SEUPB additional questions

Additional Attitudinal Survey Questions			
Result Indicator	Indicator Measure	How	When
Significant Attitudinal and behavioural change	70% of participants indicating they feel more comfortable and confident in addressing issues within their local community or increased your understanding of issues impacting their local community.	Via survey response to question <i>'Has this project helped you feel more comfortable and confident in addressing issues within your local community or increased your understanding of issues impacting your local community?'</i>	On completion of activity
	70% of participants indicating they have decreased fear about meeting others from a different culture, identity or opinion to their own.	Via survey response to question <i>'Has this project decreased your fear about meeting others from a different culture, identity or opinion to your own?'</i>	On completion of activity



Revisions & Version Control

Belfast City Council

Good Relations Strategy 2026-2035

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Foreword

TO BE WRITTEN FOR THE LORD MAYOR (OR PARTY GROUP LEADERS?)

INTRODUCTION

In the period of the last Belfast City Council good relations strategy there were a few watershed moments commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement and the 30th anniversary of ceasefires. The delivery of ceasefires and the Agreement, and marking their anniversaries, all occurred in Belfast.

As moments that symbolised the closing of a communal conflict that had affected and traumatised a generation, the ceasefires and Agreement ushered in an era of hope and aspiration for the city that it could not have imagined during the darkness of the conflict period.

Since that time Belfast has become almost unrecognisable. The physical and economic regeneration has been breathtaking for those that lived through The Troubles. The city centre is used and utilised by people from all backgrounds in a way that the parents and grandparents of the young people who now socialise freely, could not have imagined for themselves and are grateful to witness for their children.

Belfast is a different city from that in the 1990s, barely recognisable for people over 40 years old. Those under 40 years of age, who have grown up in a society relatively free from violent conflict, can imagine nothing else.

The courageous relationship-building and reconciliation work of many people from across the community can take credit for it.

And yet, Belfast is not a normal city. While there are 'normal' issues of poverty, dislocation, unlawfulness, and adapting to the changing and shifting challenges of a European region, there are deeper issues of segregation and legacy, mistrust and distrust, that are left over from the conflict years.

Our undoubtedly good relations progress facilitated groundbreaking community responses to the Covid pandemic; and helped formulate coordinated approaches to the more recent cultural expression and racism-related issues that have been experienced across these islands.

However, with the progress made and significant and serious relationships built, and while new relationships need nurtured and existing ones sustained, there is a need to go beyond good relations to a new iteration of a peace process that originated in Belfast. Conscious of old fears and issues still to be addressed, amid the new fears and challenges, there is need to create a new dynamic of cohesion and belonging for the city that teaches others how to do it. This is something that this City can lead on, because Belfast, much more than other areas, knows the alternative.

The city has achieved so much since the end of conflict in the late 1990s, and building on those successes it is time to offer new direction in its peacebuilding leadership.

This strategy offers this new direction engaging a *Whole Community and Whole Council* approach with a focus on what needs to change and cross-sectoral measurement of that change.

In a city where people at different times are prone to criticise or undermine because of a real or perceived slight to community background, good relations is also a process of resilience. The Council can therefore be rightly proud of what its good relations programmes have achieved over the years. While recognising those achievements, it is ready to further normalise the work it does to build a more cohesive city where all people feel a stronger sense of belonging, regardless of where they are in the city or whatever their background and beliefs.

This strategy sets challenges for the city for 2035 and targets for 2050 that recognise the positives in difference and the strengths of diversity. Progress is not taken for granted; complacency and indifference have no place in the strategy while cohesion and belonging are pursued robustly.

Through a focus on transformative rather than performative activities, the strategy challenges all sectors and all sides of the community to build a more cohesive city that values belonging for all.

CONTEXT

Belfast City Council is one of, if not the, leading advocate for and deliverer of good relations work in Northern Ireland. Its status as the largest local authority with leadership from all political parties, and the quality and impact of its work on good relations to date, is widely recognised and very well regarded.

Good relations focuses primarily under Section 75(2) of the 1998 Northern Ireland Act on promoting positive relationships between people with different political opinions, racial background or religious beliefs.

At its core, good relations manages, counters and reduces racism and sectarianism.

A definition of both includes:

Racism is defined in many ways in different sources, but the fundamentals come back to:

- Feelings of inherent superiority based on background.
- Prejudice and disrespect.
- The continued play out of issues at a local level through things like graffiti and vocalisation of prejudice.
- Systemic or institutional racism developed sometimes over a prolonged period.
- Subsequent issues around decision-making processes, lack of involvement in decision-making and lack of recognition of contributions made.

As a result, the strategy includes references to:

- Systems and procedures by agencies and others that may include unconscious bias.
- Capacity building to raise abilities to tackle or address everyday or systemic racism and sectarianism.
- Identification of positive role models.
- Dialogues on the consequence of racism at an individual and structural level, and how to challenge it.

Sectarianism is defined in many ways in different sources, but the fundamentals come back to:

- Narrow-minded or parochial attitudes toward people of different faith beliefs.
- Being confined to the limits of a particular denomination or being biased toward people and beliefs of a particular denomination.
- Sectarianism in Ireland is often related to people from a Protestant or Catholic background, but could equally relate to differences between people of other faith backgrounds.
- There are often links from the denomination to other cultural, historical and political differences.

As a result, the strategy includes references to:

- Inter faith collaboration; because while there can be a diluted relationship between religion, beliefs and political, historical and cultural differences, nevertheless sectarianism can still play a part even if those differences are increasingly less clear in a city such as Belfast;
- Parochialism or limited engagement and loyalty locally is important to sectarianism, and so the benefit of looking beyond the local and exploring good practice elsewhere can be important.

While there are many definitions of what constitutes racism, most agree that sectarianism is a subset of racism especially in systemic manifestations. In Belfast in recent years that includes a focus on Islamophobia, or prejudice against other faiths, as well as Belfast's traditional religious divides.

Belfast City Council's good relations strategy exists within a context of a wide-ranging policy context especially from The Executive Office, at Stormont, which supports financially the delivery of the actions.

The most pertinent over-arching policy document is the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) strategy which is aligned with the detail and recommendations within this strategy.

The Together Building a United Community (T:BUC) strategy was produced in 2013 and is currently being reviewed by The Executive Office. It has four over-arching strategic themes:

Our Children and Young People aims to continue to improve attitudes amongst our young people and to build a community where they can play a full and active role in building good relations.

Our Shared Community aims to create a community where division does not restrict the opportunities of individuals and where all areas are open and accessible to everyone. Specific actions include the creation of four urban villages and ten new shared neighbourhoods.

Our Safe Community aims to create a community where everyone feels safe in moving around and where life choices are not inhibited by fears about safety. Specific actions include working to build a culture where people feel comfortable to report when they have been the victim of intimidation or harassment and the creation of an interface barrier support package.

Our Cultural Expression aims to create a community, which promotes mutual respect and understanding, is strengthened by its diversity and where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced.

These four strategic priorities are at the heart of Belfast City Council's new good relations strategy and evidenced throughout.

The good relations indicators produced by The Executive Office are foundations for the indicators suggested for the Shared City Partnership in this strategy. The Shared City Partnership is a working group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the Council and oversees and drives the Good Relations work of the Council. Its make-up and function are detailed later along with proposals for a refined role for this unique body.

The Council will adopt a new framework for measuring its impact, which embraces a focus on making Belfast a more cohesive city beyond the good relations indicators and challenging all sectors to contribute to the work as well as measuring impact. As such, the approach is a *Whole Community, Whole Council* approach to its new, good relations strategy.

The Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025 is also produced by The Executive Office. It has four specific outcomes:

Equality of service provision:

People from a minority ethnic background can access and benefit from all public services equally.

Elimination of prejudice, racism and hate crime:

Effective protection and redress is provided against all manifestations of racism and racist hate crime and a victim centred approach.

Increased participation, representation and belonging:

People from minority ethnic backgrounds participate in and are represented fully in all aspects of life – public, political, economic, social and cultural – and enjoy a shared sense of “belonging”.

Cultural diversity is celebrated:

The rights of people from minority ethnic backgrounds to maintain their culture and traditions in line with human rights norms and to pass them on to subsequent generations are recognised and supported.

Recent research from The Executive Office suggests that key barriers to integration include social inclusion, education issues, leadership in government, and lack of understanding. Many respondents to the consultation on the draft strategy agreed with its vision, and that increasing engagement, involving community groups, and improving diversity were important.

The Refugee Integration Strategy, published in May 2025 included a vision for ‘a cohesive and shared society where people seeking protection, are valued and feel safe, are integrated into communities and are supported to reach their full potential’.

The strategy has four high-level outcomes which are as follows:

Outcomes:

1: *People who seek asylum and refuge are valued and respected.*

People who seek asylum and refuge are respected as members of our communities and their presence, knowledge and contribution to society is recognised and valued.

2: *People who seek asylum and refuge are safe and feel secure.*

People who seek asylum and refuge feel welcome and live here safely without fear of persecution or discrimination resulting from their immigration status outcome.

3: *People who seek asylum and refuge exercise their rights and responsibilities.*

People who seek asylum and refuge are integrated into diverse and inclusive communities and are aware of and able to exercise their rights and responsibilities.

4: *People who seek asylum and refuge are supported to achieve their full potential.*

People who seek asylum and refuge have access to services and support to achieve their full potential.

In Northern Ireland as a whole, in 2024-2025, there was a significant increase in race hate motivated incidents and crimes - 1,807 incidents (an increase of 454 on the previous year) and 1,188 crimes (an increase of 349 on the previous year). There were nearly double the number of race hate incidents (1,807) than sectarian hate motivated incidents (910) and more race hate motivated crimes than all other hate related crimes put together: 1,188 compared to 947.1. It is important to note that this data is based on reported incidents, it is clear there is a large number of unreported hate crime which means the above statistics in reality are much larger.

The Council's good relations strategy is consistent with the Belfast Agenda community plan including its five themes of people and communities, economy, place, planet and compassion, and takes on board all of the key issues and challenges.

¹ PSNI report to NIPB June 2025

Existing Delivery

The Council's existing good relations action plan included support for 36 programmes broadly split between the four TBUC strategic themes of Children and Young People (eight programmes), Shared Community (ten programmes), Safe Community (six programmes), and Cultural Expression (12 programmes).

The unit cost is highest for Safe Community at £400 per participant and lowest for Children and Young People at £118 per person.

Total good relations investment in programmes is £784k, most of which comes from Council (57%) and the balance from TEO.

The largest item of investment is in good relations small grants (£280k) with other programmes including St Patrick's Day, a positive cultural expression bonfire beacons programme, a civic engagement programme, minority ethnic equality and inclusion programme, an interface engagement programme, a shared education schools programme, and a strategic connections programme.

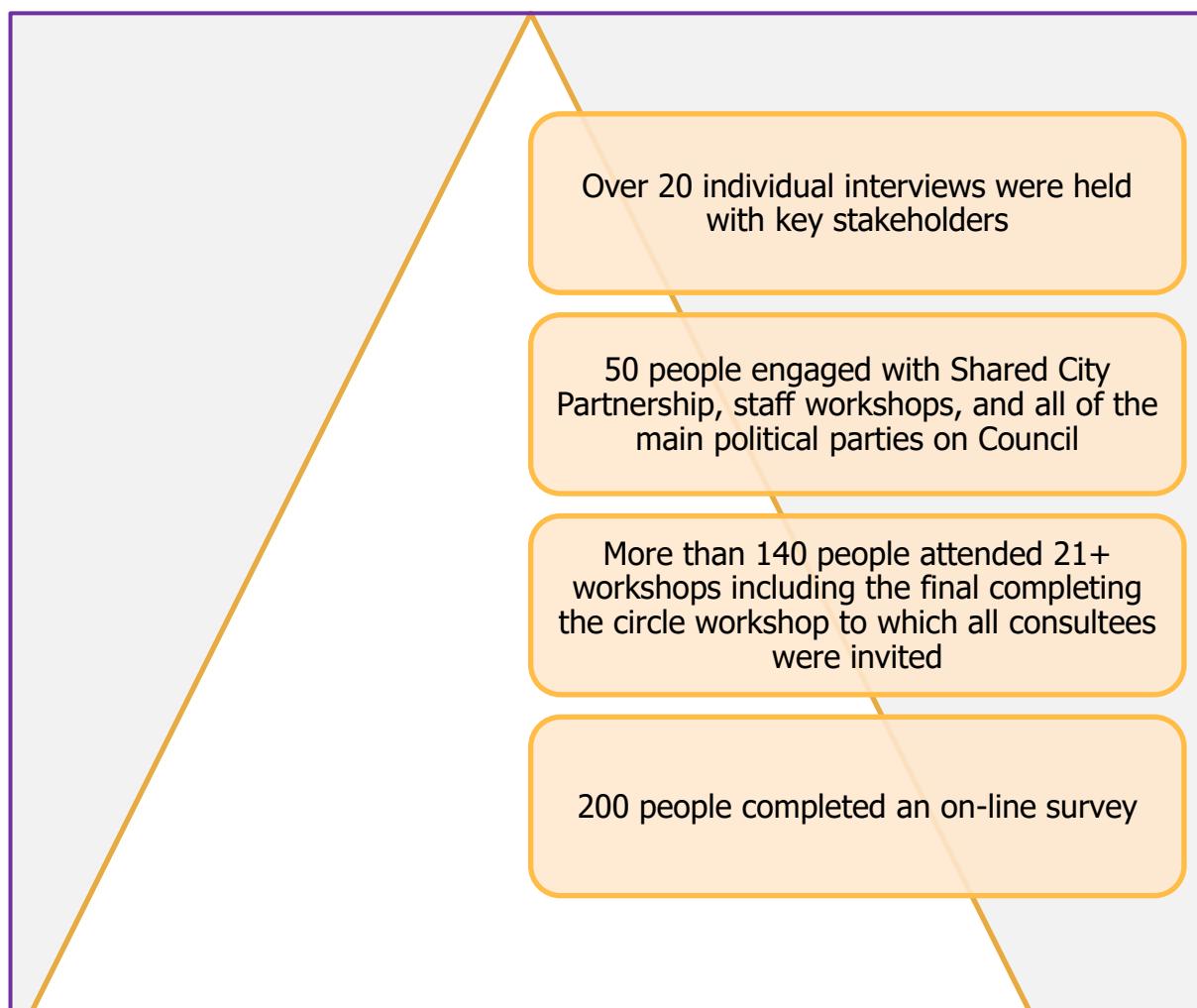
There are detailed and robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in the existing strategy and the programmes are well regarded and considered effective. Many of the projects are consistent with the criteria linked to building a positive peace or/and an integrated social cohesion framework.

WHAT WE WERE TOLD

Overall, more than 400 people participated in the consultation process, events and activities in the development of this new Good Relations Strategy, such as attending any of 21+ workshops and/or completing a survey. All the main political parties were consulted and interviews offered to all 60 elected members with an additional half-day open session for all elected members.

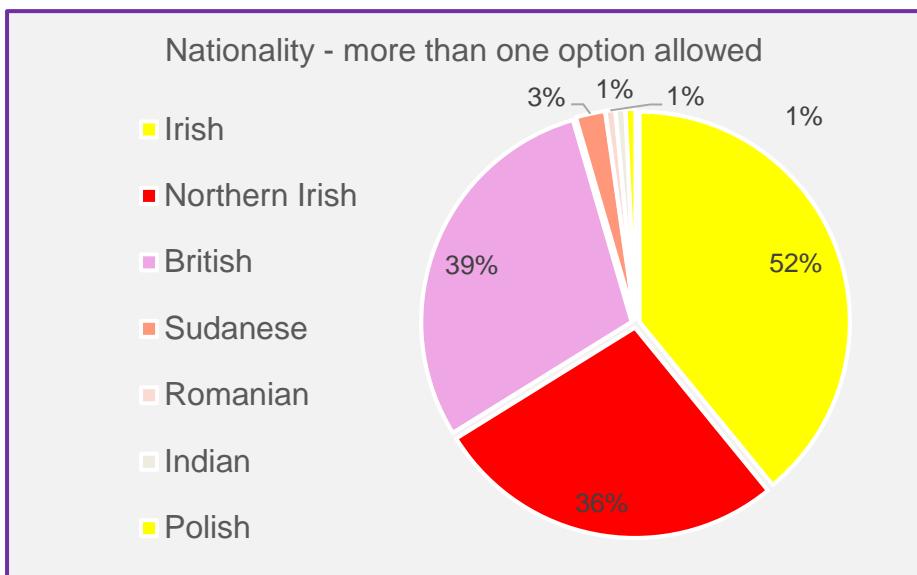
Consultation activities included:

- 0 Workshops targeting minority and equality protected people and organisations.
- 0 One to one meetings where relevant.
- 0 Several sessions with Council staff.
- 0 Meetings with and further liaison with Sinn Féin, DUP, Alliance, UUP, SDLP, Green Party.
- 0 Offer of one-to-one interviews with all elected members and a half-day open session.
- 0 An on-line survey that could be broken down to community, geographic area, community background, sector.



Survey

The survey provided a clear context and direction regarding issues raised, ideas to prioritise and issues that inhibit the development of good relations.

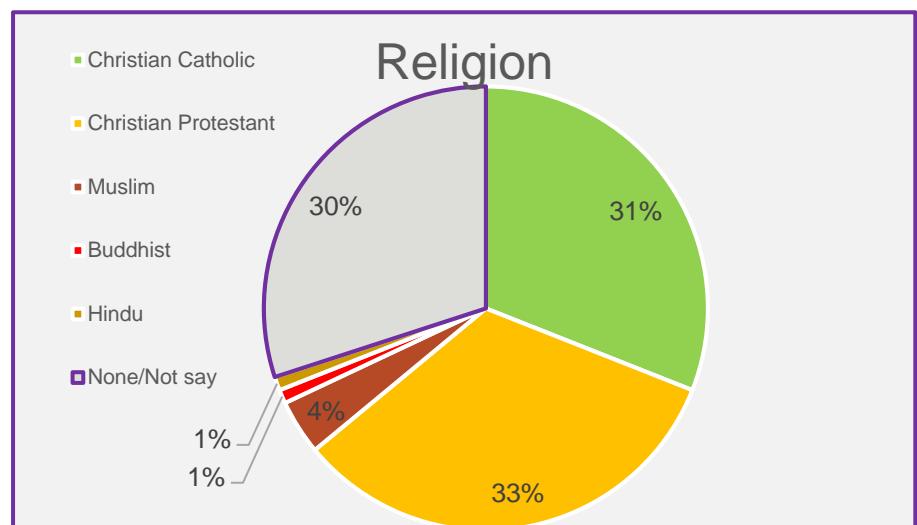


The religious profile is broadly reflective of the city. The number of young people completing the survey was fewer than the average population.

More women than men returned the survey, however, 41% male return rate is



good and broadly reflective of the city.

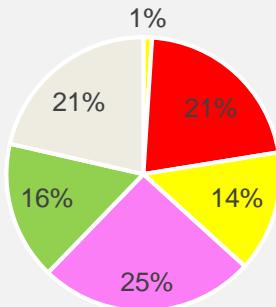


The city the survey was completed proportionately by people from the North, South, East and West Belfast.

In addition, respondents' nationalities are self-defined, with more than one answer allowed.

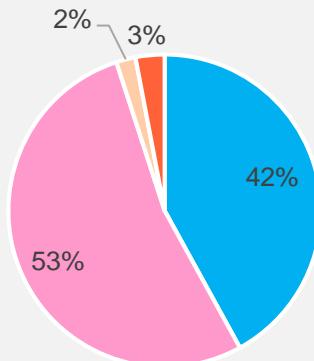
Parts of City

- Central
- East
- North
- South
- West
- Outside



Gender

- Male
- Female
- Non binary
- Prefer not say



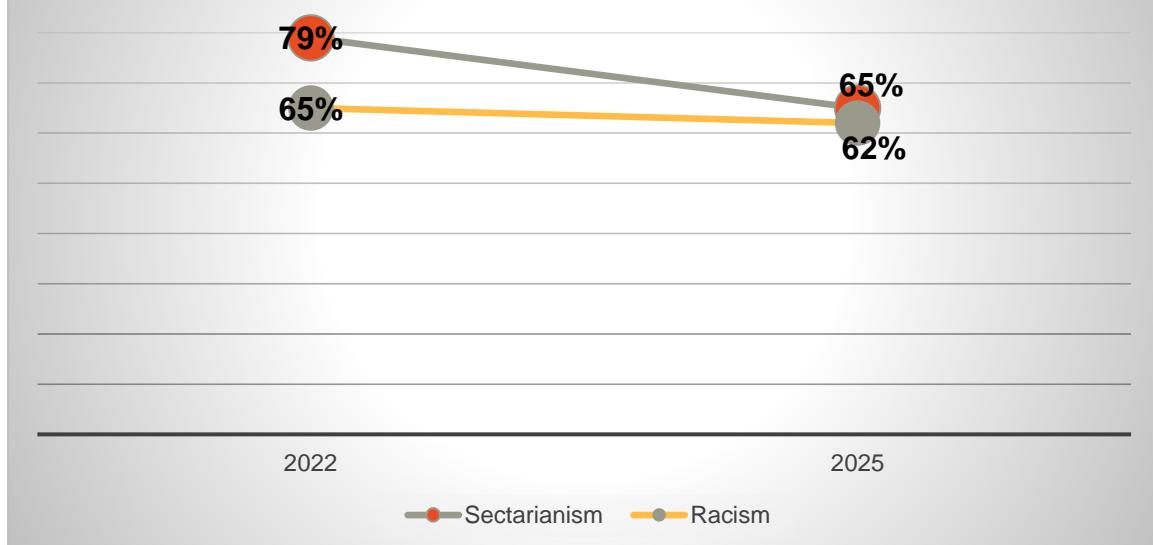
Given the demographic returns, we estimate in the survey responses overall a confidence rate of 94% and a margin of error of +/- 5%. High level results included:

- 0 92% believe good relations are very important for the city.
- 0 While 11% feel the city is very shared, 9% believe it is not at all shared - the majority (79%) feel it is a bit shared.
- 0 A significant number (43%) always feel a sense of belonging in the city compared to just 6% who never feel a sense of belonging – the balance, (52%), sometimes have a sense of belonging to the city.
- 0 While 18% feel their cultural identity is always respected, just 9% believe it not at all respected. The balance, (73%), believe it is sometimes respected.
- 0 24% believe they can always express their cultural identity compared to 14% who say they never can express their cultural identity. 62% feel that they can sometimes express their cultural identity.
- 0 Most people (65%) would like to see multi-annual grants being provided for Good Relations work. 4% would prefer no grants and 8% grants of just one year.

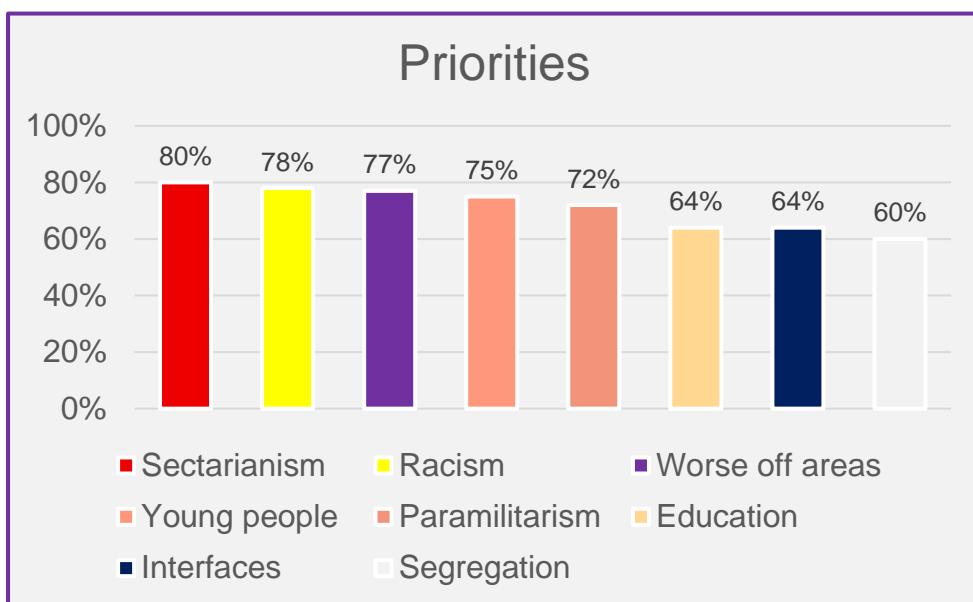
Most people still believe there to be substantial amounts of sectarianism and racism in the city.

There has been some improvement in the degree of racism and sectarianism perceived in the city from 2022, though still significant issues remain, as statistics show.

Lot Sectarianism and Racism - 2022 v 2025



Almost all respondents believed good relations was a very important part of what Council does (91%) – just 8% saying it was fairly important and 1% that it was not at all important.



The key priorities for those replying are highlighted in the table. A focus on educational under-achievement, socio-economic issues, interface communities and the important needs around challenging sectarianism, racism and paramilitarism are all considered key priorities for the strategy.

paramilitarism are all considered key priorities for the strategy.

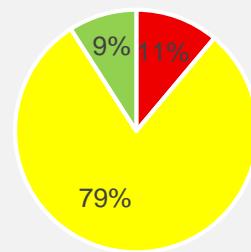
While just 11% believe the city very shared, most (79%) believe it a little shared and 9% not at all shared.

However, many people (43%) always feel a sense of belonging while 52% sometimes feel a sense of belonging.

When asked whether their cultural identity or background is respected in the city most say sometimes (73%), with 18% always and 9% never.

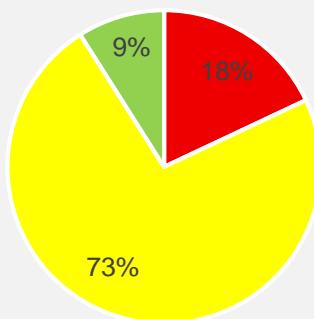
There are no significant differences between people from different backgrounds.

Is Belfast a shared city?



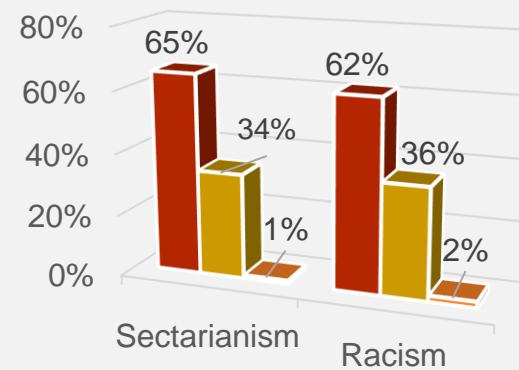
■ Very shared ■ Little shared
■ Not at all shared

Is your cultural identity/background respected?



■ Yes always ■ Sometimes ■ Never

Degree of Racism and Sectarianism



At a similar level, 29% believe they are always able to express their own cultural identity or background while 62% believe they can sometimes, and 9% never.

Most people believe there to be substantial amounts of sectarianism and racism in the city.

When asked whether Council should offer grants at all, or whether they should be one-year or multi-annual, a significant majority (65%) believe grants should be multi-annual. Just 8% support one-year grants while 4% do not believe there should be grants at all. The balance suggested 'other' though the options provided by those in an open comment box supported multi-annual (sometimes for five years) and others with other options.

Interviews and Workshops

During the consultation, more than 20 workshops and over 20 interviews with key community, voluntary, faith, and public sector representatives were conducted. Meetings were offered with every elected representative as well as sessions involving each political party. In addition, three workshops with Council staff, and a session with the Shared City Partnership were held.

In total, more than 400 people were engaged in the consultation through the survey, workshops, interviews or seminars.

The main feedback from the workshops and interviews included:

- 0 A lack of investment to deal with demographic change including inadequate recognition of the pressures it creates on both established and newcomer communities.
- 0 The benefits of longer-term funding, such as three years, that will better help planning and delivery, but with recognition that some community groups with lower capacity benefit from small, one-year funding availability.
- 0 Trust in public agencies is important especially when dealing with sensitive issues of relevance to Council, such as policing, youth work and others. Issues such as racism, coercive control and paramilitary presence, use of social media and radicalisation of young people were issues raised during the consultation which is of relevance to trusting key agencies to manage and prevent harm. Political influence on public opinion was also raised.
- 0 A comprehensive integration strategy and cultural awareness or competence was considered helpful.
- 0 There was a perceived lack of transparency in decisions around resourcing and funding.
- 0 Developing the capacity of all communities to engage effectively in the responsibilities associated with building cohesion or undertaking good relations work was highlighted, although particular needs were also identified in some communities.
- 0 While coercive control including by paramilitaries was mentioned it was also mentioned in the context of: gatekeepers in newcomer communities and with some leaders regarding violence against women and girls (VAWG), anti-migrant rhetoric, and in recruiting young people.
- 0 There was a need for real change in attitudes, behaviours and confidence to adequately challenge having indicators that are more ambitious.

- 0 Good relations efforts often contributed to helping improve social issues – health, housing, educational achievement, employability and the environment.
- 0 Racism was being further fuelled by housing stress, pressure on established communities or tenancy uncertainties.
- 0 There are many different units in the council that benefit from closeness of alignment and coordination with good relations support.
- 0 There is an economic impact of racism on, for example, tourism or not attracting sufficient workers for key roles, or people feeling they have to leave due to fear about their welfare and that of their families.

All of the feedback received, the key points highlighted, and main findings from the survey, are reflected in the strategic priorities, pillars, and many of the actions that flow from within this strategy.

OTHER ISSUES AFFECTING GOOD RELATIONS

Many issues of public importance in recent years have been debated in Council or been reflected in news stories. Often these issues relate to ongoing legacy discussions, young people, education, policing, and health amongst others. We may refer to some of them also as social justice type issues. Many are summarised here arising from research, surveys or further consultation.

Recent events, including public disorder, reflect a need to reinforce anti-racism work but also to acknowledge the causes of either misunderstanding or fear of demographic change. Other areas of these islands have developed programmes to manage that change, sometimes in areas where there has been more substantial violence than anything Belfast has experienced. The last good relations strategy suggested Council staff visit areas of good practice to learn about those successful initiatives and the circumstances have not changed in 2025. The need has, in fact, increased.

Given the highly segregated nature of Belfast and the continued existence of many peace barriers, or interfaces, and the perceived divisiveness of politics still, it is only to be expected that there are still caveats in many peoples' sense of belonging, from all sides of the community; a sense that their cultural identity is respected, but sometimes not always.

The issues that are referenced in the strategy as social justice issues include those associated with educational underachievement, disadvantage, access to green space, and access to stable housing tenancy or employment, amongst others.

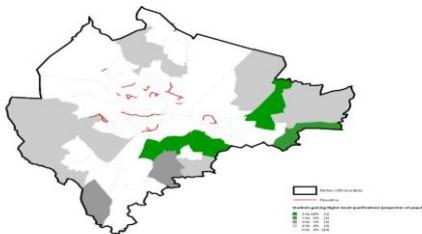
The feedback from the consultation indicates that these issues were priorities for communities as well as at times a sense of loss, challenges associated with redevelopment in some areas, and ongoing uncertainty on what some might call unresolved legacy issues.

For example, the enclosed maps overlay where green space (in green) and peace barriers are (in red), higher educational attainment (green) and highest deprivation levels (brown and purple). They show that these social justice issues are most prevalent in areas close to interfaces and peace barriers, and in working class communities across all community backgrounds, in all parts of the city.

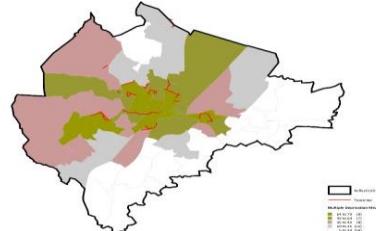
The physical legacy of conflict: "peace" walls



Higher Education attainment levels



Deprivation levels across the city



Key Issues

More generally in Northern Ireland, and sometimes in Belfast, there is a sense that in promoting and delivering work on good relations:

- 0 There has been significant success, easily overlooked, in the last decades in building relationships along with the positive progress made in ensuring political stability and the development of reconciliation.
- 0 Whether in local or central government, delivery should include a commitment toward 'transformative' dialogue and decision-making rather than a 'performative' approach.
- 0 There could be greater utilisation of an inter-section of good relations with social and economic issues of relevance to those areas where good relations efforts are most acute. For example, the environment or employability could be the type of issues that could deliver excellent, issue-based good relations work.
- 0 While still intending to encompass all aspects of work within a local government setting, the notion of good relations being integrated into the core work of a Council is often left on the periphery rather than as a central component.
- 0 While recognising the progress that has been made by those supporting good relations, Belfast and Northern Ireland is still a highly segregated society epitomised by politics, cultural identity, physical barriers, faith and ethnicity.
- 0 New challenges, including for example demographic change, need to be better integrated into the good relations and social cohesion responses of government, local and central. However, these discussions should be about the organisation of services and resource scarcity rather than suggesting a narrative that new communities are necessarily a drain on resources.
- 0 Recognising the increasing number and relative proportion of race hate incidents and crimes is important; while understanding the fear evident in all communities from change, or being left behind, cultural loss, what people have come from or what reaction there will be to people locally. There appears to be significant tensions around, for example, housing in relation to newcomer communities.
- 0 Tensions around housing stress and lack of adequate service provision contributed to a recent rise in hostility towards newcomers and subsequent or associated racist behaviour and crime.
- 0 The impact of social media and the level of misinformation which is widely circulated appears to be fuelling negative perceptions. While a proportion of this is believed to be a deliberate attempt to escalate tensions, much appears to be the result of fear or lack of accurate information.

- 0 There are currently programmes which work with young people to address developing issues related to social media and its misuse. Should they prove to be successful they could potentially be rolled out more widely.
- 0 Programmes which seek to address misinformation and support engagement between people who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who are from the established communities in Belfast could potentially support greater understanding and respect across different cultures and faiths.
- 0 Perceived criminality or/and media coverage relative to newcomer communities particularly among young males has contributed to negative perceptions.
- 0 Within the minority ethnic communities there is very real fear and questions as to whether Belfast is a safe place to live and work. This may have economic as well as social consequence, not least for the health service which is heavily reliant on migrant workers. With the major universities being situated in Belfast, racist incidents have a potential to deter overseas students.
- 0 Concern about the impact on tourism should also be taken into consideration particularly in relation to the high visibility of passengers off cruise ships visiting the city centre.
- 0 Young minority ethnic people and children are reporting racist incidents within schools and feel that they are not being addressed. Associated mental health issues and anxiety around school attendance should racism and Islamophobia not be effectively dealt with, are having consequence around both educational achievement and wellbeing.
- 0 There also a sense that inadequate cultural awareness or induction programmes for newcomers can result in neighbour disputes and misunderstanding on all sides.
- 0 Cultural competency/awareness for service providers and those working in communities across Belfast is needed. The view was expressed that often staff are anxious about making mistakes or being labelled as racist which can lead to avoiding people from minority ethnic backgrounds or not dealing with tensions. Such awareness would support those in decision-making positions to have wider perspective and be better informed.

These issues, applicable to Northern Ireland, are considered for relevance in Belfast through this new Strategy.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND TOGETHER; BUILDING A UNITED COMMUNITY (T:BUC)

Strategic Focus of New Strategy

This new strategy is consistent with the T:BUC strategy from the Executive Office, either the T:BUC review due to be published or the existing strategy. However, the Council wants to also independently update its strategic ambition for good relations and for the city as it enters the next iteration of the peace and reconciliation process.

While the existing delivery of good relations by the Council is very well regarded and effective, it is time to re-set the city's good relations strategic direction, review and enhance its role internally within the Council, and ensure consistent and complementary delivery on social cohesion in all that the Council provides. That will include re-focusing the role of The Shared City Partnership.

The strategic focus therefore seeks to identify a new iteration of reconciliation beyond good relations, recognising the critical role which good relations will continue to have in building a positive peace, but incorporating the critically important elements of what will stimulate an even more cohesive city.

Concept of an Integrated Social Cohesion Approach and Strategy

Embedding the peace is an ongoing process that has been done well to date with much capacity developed and sustained in communities and local government. There is importance in continuing to positively provide purpose, content and actions that serve the needs of all people in a post-conflict setting, where issues and contrary beliefs remain; and where new challenges and dynamics emerge, competing with an older set of views, concerns and structures.

Ensuring genuine attention to the needs and interests of all, including new and existing communities, in terms of relations, policies, actions and structures, is paramount. This is more important in a context of misinformation in the digital era and ongoing radicalisation of people of all ages whether for political, religious or ethnicity agendas. The role that social media plays in peddling harmful misinformation which raises tensions around sectarianism and racism is a new and significant challenge to the promotion and maintenance of good relations.

The next iteration of the reconciliation and peace building processes, therefore, needs to be more complex and complete than the building of relationships, which has been successful to date and continues to be important. That next iteration needs to focus on the building of a more cohesive, inclusive and socially just community that embeds peace and enhances a sense of belonging for and by all.

It should focus not just on building good relations and relationships which are the foundation of any peace building process. It should go beyond good relations to create fairer and more open ways to access services and rights, have social justice running through its core like a golden thread, and develop trust in key institutions that are

equitably regarded by all. It must also start to incorporate a meaningful strategy and focus on reconciliation and further building a positive peace.

This new Belfast **Good Relations and Social Cohesion strategy**, therefore, focuses on inclusion, belonging and trust, on identifying the rights and responsibilities equally applicable to all, and a long-term *Whole Community and Whole Council* approach to building a more cohesive city, with the goal of meaningful reconciliation at its core.

Every aspect of City Council policy and design should include reference to and focus on its impact on developing greater cohesion and better relations.

This strategy includes five pillars for building a more cohesive city:

1. Continue to **repair and refine relations within a reconciliation lens and re-embolden** how those relations can improve the lives of people across the community. This may include, for example, a hybrid small annual small grants with a more focused multi-annual grants programme or further advance work beneath the radar, but well regarded and successful cultural expression programmes. The dynamics of different types of fear within local established communities and newcomer communities may also be relevant and assist in supporting positive cultural expression in communities that feel a sense of cultural loss.
2. **Develop capacity** to sustain and strengthen decision-making and project delivery across the community. This includes capacity to undertake social cohesion and good relations work across all sectors in the community and all departments in the Council. Capacity is not just focused on training and knowledge but ensuring that decision-making processes within Council and other public agencies are robust, fair, aware of implications; and the good relations/social cohesion function is appropriately positioned within Council. Some communities are more advanced than others in their capacity and community infrastructure. Some may need additional resources to get to a position of parity in their ability to engage with others in the good relations process. It will also include successful initiatives such as the migrant forum.

We were told the Migrant Forum has demonstrated a capacity to identify key issues and bring significant public agencies and community-based organisations into greater collaboration. So, the strategy suggests how to sustain the Migrant Forum with an even greater focus on anticipating and challenging negative narratives.

If a fear or sense of loss on key issues across communities is part of the dynamic, especially within communities close to interfaces and in areas of greatest socio-economic need, a key question for the strategy is how does Council continue to support peaceful and lawful cultural celebrations while being recognised as a supporter of cultural expression in all communities?

3. Ensure **greater openness and transparency** in decision-making and delivery. This includes decisions made within Council and encouraging more openness outside Council with community, public sector and other stakeholders. Funding decisions should also bear in mind the importance of being seen to be fair and equitable as an outcome, and monitoring & evaluation processes that are simpler and more relevant to the projects funded.
4. Develop **trust in key institutions** by all people across the community. Key institutions relevant to social cohesion include, for example, local government services, policing and youth services amongst others. Making good relations therefore more relevant to the work of Council in, for example, policing and community safety is relevant as is being aware of any trust issues any community may have in the Council's decision-making processes.

Statistics show that trust in public agencies is important in developing a more positive, progressive peace. So, the strategy suggests that key public agencies engage in specific trust-building initiatives.

We were told that a framework or charter for Good Relations could be useful as a commitment by elected members in how they engage with each other, and with all communities, but even more so perhaps for community-based projects to adhere to if they wish to benefit from support and funding from the Council. How cultural competence is manifested is part of future planning.

5. Deliver better and meaningful **social justice outcomes**, with a focus on those interface areas that still suffer most within our still divided society. This may also touch on issues of relevance such as gender equity, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), and with minority ethnic and more disadvantaged communities. Access to green space and ongoing impact of legacy and other issues relevant to those communities such as physical and mental health and well-being, those most impacted by the conflict are also the type of issues that have social justice implications.

Ongoing segregation fails residents especially if they live at interface areas close to peace barriers. The conflict and its legacy more deeply and negatively affects them, and they are more likely to live in areas of greatest deprivation. Often newcomers and refugees are living in housing in these areas of greatest deprivation. If these communities cannot be left behind and they have nowhere to go, the good relations agenda needs to pay particular attention to the inter-connectedness of disadvantage, interfaces and common concerns.

Common needs across communities can provide a greater focus for good relations and cohesion activities.

Together, these five pillars will help develop an **overarching dynamic or sense of belonging for the city** to which all people can buy in to. This includes all communities including newcomer communities as well as people from traditional, established communities; and progressing work at interfaces with potentially different perceptions of priorities.

These pillars do not fail to recognise that Belfast City Council and other agencies, have helped to change the city remarkably and for the better in the last 25+ years. The change, regeneration, and improvements have been positive and of benefit to all communities. However, more than 30 years since ceasefires, and 27 years since the Agreement, the city needs to finish the job of a reconciliation process that is for the benefit of all, leaves no one behind in real or perceived terms, and builds a genuinely cohesive city by the middle of the 21st century. In this period, our poorest communities are those who often live at interfaces and closest to peace barriers and are still our poorest communities after many decades of investment. Leaving no one behind should mean Council working hardest at areas separated by peace barriers.

However, feedback also suggested the importance of acknowledging new and invisible peace barriers that includes for established and newcomer communities, issues such as language and cultural barriers.

Therefore, the strategy for the city should have good relations and social justice at its core, all of which should be critical aims for any agency developing and delivering services for people from all backgrounds. These social justice priorities are as applicable to keeping people safe including women and girls as they are to providing accessible services for those who need them most.

The benefits of such an approach will be to:

- 0 Save money through prevention and earlier intervention.
- 0 Have stronger, resilient and more aspirational communities where there is mutual support across political, ethnic or religious divides.
- 0 Have the goal of meaningful reconciliation as an intentional outcome of this work.
- 0 Increase the resilience of the city.
- 0 Deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes, particularly in interface areas where they are most acute.

We were asked whether the Shared City Partnership can drive and deliver a critical leadership function in agreeing what a sense of belonging is and what needs to change and be supported to achieve it. Providing a respected vehicle for a *Whole Community, Whole Council*, approach with a considered focus on inter-agency collaboration in a Shared City Partnership, is a feature of the strategy driving cohesion and overseeing delivery.

- 0 Provide a further basis for economic health and growth.
- 0 Reduce conflict, enhance healing, and increase support for public agencies.

This approach speaks to the benefit of intercultural rather than multicultural approaches to developing cohesion, where integration and relationship building is the aim rather than a separate provision, where misinformation is challenged, and where long-term as well as short-term approaches are embraced. This will simplify the measurements of success where complex and often inappropriate integration indicators are replaced with ones that are shorter, easier to understand; and more accurate measurements are used especially for short-term projects. It also is a strategy that realises that the impact of projects able to plan for just a one-year project is restricted compared to what multi-annual funding can deliver although some newer groups appreciate smaller, one-year support; which is why an initial hybrid system is included.

The strategy commits the Council to develop 10-year targets for Social Cohesion for the city, as well as a series of three-year good relations action plans. It advocates for digital innovation. It seeks the active promotion of integration while tackling social exclusion, relevant to established as well as new communities, in countering extremism and radicalisation. Radicalisation includes people from existing and newcomer communities where young people are being used by organisations to act unlawfully; or where people are frustrated at real or perceived threats to communities, or racism or sectarianism is directed at them.

Regardless of a community's politics, cultural identity, ethnicity or faith, there are common issues and needs that are reinforced in an integrated social cohesion strategy; there are common responses relevant to these issues and needs; there are common approaches that work whether longer or shorter-term; there is a need to ensure that cohesion and good relations tackle social exclusion, poverty, fear and feelings of being left behind, as stimulants to counter this radicalisation.

That is why Belfast City Council, any Council, requires a *Whole Community, Whole Council*/approach that takes seriously the ambition of long-term social cohesion targets and three-year good relations action plans that take the first steps in that generational social cohesion process. All functions of a Council affect cohesion, trust, and equitable provision; and processes for decision-making affect it just as much which includes how people engage with each other within the Council and within and between projects that receive Council funding.

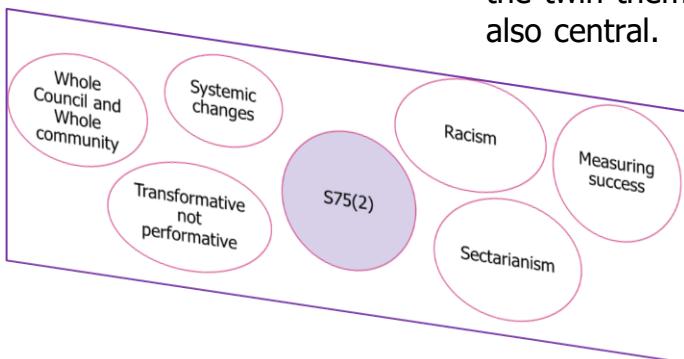
Building on the impressive change it has helped facilitate to date, Belfast City Council seeks to lead the recognition of a *genuine* reconciliation process where people understand and believe that progress for all is predicated on an honest desire to understand and meet the concerns and needs of others.

DRIVERS FOR THE STRATEGY

Acknowledging how far the city has come and how far it has still to go, is central to the strategy, accepting there are still substantial issues of segregation and ongoing legacy issues that need addressed, as well as new challenges linked to changing demographics in communities.

The obligations under Section 75(2) are critical and being keen to challenge head on the twin themes of racism and sectarianism are also central. However, throughout the strategy

the Council is prioritising measuring impact which also means adopting a transformative rather than performative challenge to all activities, participants, projects and staff and Councillors.



Broadly, the strategy includes five key pillars and an overarching theme, focused on relationships between people from different identities, faiths, beliefs, cultures, opinions, backgrounds, or between equality groups, through sustained cross community and intercultural contact.

The key pillars are:

- 0 Continuing to **repair and refine relations within a reconciliation lens and re-embolden** how those relations can improve the lives of people across the community.
- 0 **Developing capacity further** to sustain and strengthen decision-making and project delivery across the community.
- 0 Ensuring **greater openness and transparency** in decision-making and delivery.
- 0 Developing **trust in key institutions** by all people across the community. Key institutions relevant to social cohesion include those members of the Shared City Partnership.
- 0 Delivering better and meaningful **social justice outcomes**, with a focus on those interface areas that still suffer most from our divided society yet have many needs and issues in common.

These pillars are the foundation of an **overarching dynamic strategy for a sense of belonging in the city** to which all people can buy in to, participate in developing, and deliver together.

The strategic pillars will be delivered within a context of an outcome-based transformative vision which is why the monitoring and evaluation frameworks are stressed that will be developed hand-in-hand with the strategy and action plans as they are delivered.

The strategy and action plan, therefore, stresses transformative versus performative delivery – for staff, for partner agencies, for projects, and for elected members.

The strategy acknowledges the key challenges for the city going forward and represents a significant investment in long-term and systemic responses that will in the short-term develop relationships and change behaviours and attitudes, while supporting a greater sense of belonging for people from all backgrounds inclusive of all section 75 groups.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Belfast City Council, developing its good relations and cohesion strategy will:

Be ambitious and innovative in its approach and delivery of services

Continue to review, innovate and improve our services with community at the core and an approach that involves and engages all relevant partners within and outside the Council, as part of our *Whole Community, Whole Council* approach.

Empower people, empower staff, empower communities and empower this city

Recognise that building capacity and empowering communities and leaders is an important part of the process that is delivered by an empowered staff team and driven on-the-ground by empowered people and communities. This includes enhancing the cultural awareness/competence of all involved in decisions including elected members and key staff in other public agencies.

Share good practice, knowledge, learning and resources

Utilise the existing good practice, knowledge and skills of all within communities, sharing common aims to develop better services for local communities and promote community-based leaders and influencers especially on a cross community basis addressing common issues and needs. It also advocates for learning from good practice outside Northern Ireland.

Be open and inclusive, understanding and transparent

Be open, transparent and accountable in its working with all people, communities and organisations; with funders and public agencies; with elected representatives; and in its dealings with representatives of community based organisations working for the common good of all communities.

ROLE OF THE SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

The Shared City Partnership was established over two decades ago (formerly called the Good Relations Steering Panel) to provide a focus for good relations work in the city; create a strategic challenge to the Council; and offer advice and guidance on challenging issues. It was deliberately created with representation from the main sectors (public agencies, community, Trade Union and faith representatives) and led by representatives from the main political parties on Council. It is currently chaired by a Councillor from the largest party (Sinn Féin) with a vice chair from the next largest party (DUP).

Since it was established, the Partnership was also tasked with the role of being the city's partnership for overseeing the PEACE Programme, most latterly making decisions on the PEACEPLUS funding allocted to projects throughout the city. It has performed effectively in that role.

The Shared City Partnership is reinvigorating its operation to refocus its functions providing challenge and strategic direction on good relations to the Council and the City, and to explore being a stronger advocate.

Feedback from the consultation process suggests that the established Shared City Partnership has the potential to be robust in its provision of advice and strategic direction to Council.

The Shared City Partnership will be the focus and driver of the *Whole Community, Whole Council* approach to creating a more cohesive city, the ambition to support a transformativve rather than a performative agenda; and set and measure the outcomes and impact of the strategy.

In the first months of the strategy the Shared City Partnership will:

- Agree measurement for the new strategy to support a cohesive city, based on a bespoke Belfast cohesion framework and consistent with the T:BUC Good Relations indicators and that link with the Global Peace Index Framework.
- Agree a reporting process and mechanism for cohesion in the city through the Shared City Partnership.
- Agree cohesion targets for 2035, a timeline consistent with the Belfast Agenda.
- Cement its relationship with Belfast City Council, ensuring it has a voice and challenge function appropriate for both its members and the role of Council as an elected organisation.
- Agree an annual reporting mechanism to Belfast City Council as a whole, reflecting the strategy's *Whole Community, Whole Council* approach that provides an annual or bi-annual report on the city's state of cohesion, with support from the Global Peace Index Framework.

PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

The strategy is consistent with the T:BUC themes and identifies both a long-term vision for the city with short-term targets, shifts and refinement of structures and processes. The strategy tackles head-on the significant issues identified in the consultation process, such as community dislocation, rise in racist incidents, Islamophobic incidents and violence, and ongoing need to support positive cultural expression.

The strategy sets good relations in the city within a wider lens of cohesion and integration. This wider lens affords not just a vision and set of activities that meet needs, it also allows for a response that energises all sectors and other public agencies, as well as all sections of Council, to be more involved in the good relations agenda. This is what the strategy calls a *Whole Community, Whole Council* approach.

The Council is committing to develop pro-active and practical cohesion targets over the next 10 years, consistent with the Belfast Agenda timeline.

However, we also will develop strands that are generational with aspirations for 2050. By 2050 we have set a vision for Belfast to be significantly less segregated, significantly more culturally diverse, engaging all sections of the community in cultural expression and celebrating all ethnicities, religions and identities.

We are committed to delivering the strategy within a transformative rather than performative framework. That means The Shared City Partnership and Senior Managers within the Council robustly challenge all of those contributing to the delivery of the strategy including staff and elected members of Council, and other public agencies, in deciding on funding and in organising events, to ask whether or not activities, words and deeds that are being planned and delivered, fit criteria to be developed on what making a meaningful and transformative difference looks like.

We will not be going through the motions with activities and funding projects for the sake of funding them – they will have to prove that they are making a contribution to a more cohesive city consistent with the criteria and indicators set.

The strategy recognises, from feedback during the consultation process, the successes that have been achieved in many projects and programmes supported. These are further built on in the strategy such as supporting cultural expression, the migrant forum, and small grants funding.

However, this is a strategy that changes what and how we deliver good relations. It is a new iteration for Belfast that goes beyond good relations toward a significantly more cohesive Belfast by 2035 and beyond.

As such, this Good Relations strategy includes:

- New long-term targets for cohesion in Belfast looking to 2035 and beyond.

- A refocused and reinvigorated Shared City Partnership whose main purpose will be to develop new cohesion indicators for the city and measure their achievement on a bi-annual basis.
- A pilot three-year small grants funding programme.
- A new focus on building trust between communities and with key public agencies.
- Capacity building that, taking account of changing demographics and the challenges for decision-makers, focuses on cultural competence enhancement for all decision-makers in public agencies including Council.
- An audit of all Council activities that support good relations to assess their contribution to good relations and cohesion outcomes.

The strategy will promote programmes consistent with the themes of T:BUC and the identified five strategic pillars for cohesion in the city, building a positive peacebuilding, transformative society.

T:BUC Theme	Five Strategic Pillars	Activity/programme	New Activities
All Four	All Five	Good Relations Small grants programme for cohesion and belonging	Introduce a three-year grant allocation on a pilot basis for some grants, complementing existing one-year small grant awards. Those pilot grants will be especially helpful for projects that require a lead-in or additional planning. That may include a new theme for social justice issues tackled across interfaces or/and related to planning and developing new approaches to cultural expression including other communities.
Cultural Expression	Good relations Trust Capacity	St. Patrick's Day civic events programme	A renewed effort to include more people from traditionally unionist backgrounds and newcomer communities to create even greater inclusion in this flagship event in the city.
Cultural Expression	Good relations Trust	Positive expression cultural Beacons Programme	Continue to engage with communities to build on the progress of supporting positive cultural expression including

	Capacity		the deployment of bonfire beacons. It will proactively seek to establish better relationships between communities and key agencies. It will also explore good practice visits.
Shared Community	Trust	Building trust and celebrating an intercultural future	Will embrace significant activities within the existing Civic Engagement programme but target activities and events that will build greater trust between communities and with public agencies. Statutory partners on the Shared City Partnership should be heavily engaged along with internal Council work streams such as the Policing and Community Safety Partnership and community planning. This should be additional to existing activities.
Safe Community	Social justice Good relations Trust	TIME – The Inclusive Minority Ethnic programme	To include continued facilitation of the Migrant Forum, delivery of activities to support integration of refugees and asylum seekers, and support local communities to develop integration activities. The programme will also target inclusion of people from those communities that feel particularly pressurised by change or a sense of loss; and include a response to misinformed and disinformmed social media content, and attacks on newcomer communities. It will explore good practice visits.
Shared Community	Social justice Trust	Interface Community Engagement (ICE)	While focusing on interface communities as with an existing programme, the focus will change to seeking to build

	Openness Capacity		a consensus on key social justice issues affecting interface areas on a bespoke basis and at times developing a 'FAIR Share' modelled intervention where a 'Common Needs' approach will be developed and there is a requirement for funding activities to include communities on either side of an interface. It is likely the agreed social justice issues will include access to green space, educational under-achievement employability, physical activity or mental health.
Children and young people	Good relations Trust	Shared Education and Relationships with Agencies	<p>The programme will work in schools with students and with uniformed and non-uniformed youth organisations, as well as team leaders and staff, to enhance young people's understanding of other communities and the support available to them from other agencies and Council.</p> <p>Programmes should be transformative and include activity on challenging issues as well as common needs, and not merely based on developing contact.</p> <p>There will be a particular exploration of the impact of online and social media impact on young people, and efforts to develop their understanding of that impact.</p>
All Four	Capacity	Capacity and Cultural Competence Programme (3 C's)	The programme will make connections between all sectors. It will deliver cultural competence initiatives and capacity building. This will include a programme of work

			<p>for elected members and staff of the Council, the Shared City Partnership, and other agencies.</p> <p>Develop a Good Relations charter for all communities working with Council including those that receive funding, and for all elected members to agree and adhere to.</p> <p>It will also enhance the capacity of the Shared City Partnership and develop outcome based criteria for measuring cohesion in the city in collaboration with the Global Peace Index Framework.</p>
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RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

The strategy is written for use over the next ten years but with long term ambition in mind for the city. The city will adopt a ten and 25-year approach to achieving a city where people feel a sense of belonging always, everywhere.

Relating to potential short and long-term outcomes the strategy includes an indication of what is derived from the five strategic pillars. We will develop ten-year cohesion targets for the city consistent with the Belfast Agenda, and set even longer-term goals for 2050 to make Belfast as cohesive as it can be with a real sense of belonging enhanced across all communities, backgrounds and ethnicities. We will engage with the Global Peace Index Framework to develop realistic ambitious cohesion outcomes for the City.

Strategic Pillars	Short Term Results - in three years	Long Term Results – in ten years
Good relations activities, reimagined and reinvigorated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Identification of the critical issues that communities across interfaces, and disadvantaged communities, have in common.o Delivery of impactful projects that benefit all communities equally.o Identification of good practice from elsewhere on these islands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Good relations between and within communities openly discussing even the most sensitive issues.o Greater and welcome pro-active cross-community challenge to the Council to go further.o Belfast seen as a city of good practice across these islands on relationship building between communities including newcomer and established communities.
Social justice issues where there are common issues and needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Greater coordination of action across public agencies and Council.o Impactful projects that increase trust and sense of purpose between communities.o Increase in public commentary recognising the quality and importance of cross community work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Proactive collaboration sustained without Council input.o Reimagining of many interface and peace barriers.o Improvements in the quality of life for people across interfaces and communities within disadvantaged areas.

Strategic Pillars	Short Term Results - in three years	Long Term Results – in ten years
Trust in key institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Greater acceptance of the importance of trust-building across public agencies and their supporting roles. ○ Increased levels of trust. ○ Increased engagement in all communities with key public agencies, across all ages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All communities, including young people, show strong levels of trust of agencies including the Council and the PSNI. ○ Greater key agency engagement in all communities. ○ Comparator with levels of trust at least as good as any other region on the islands.
Openness and transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review of decision-making process and good relations recognition in the Council. ○ Communities increase trust in decision-making by Council. ○ All communities engaging better with the Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High levels of trust across all decision-making of agencies. ○ Increased funding applications to the Council across all communities. ○ Increase in cross community collaboration.
Developing capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delivery of cultural competence skills and awareness enhancement work to decision-makers in public agencies and communities. ○ An engaged Shared City Partnership that takes a leadership role for cohesion in the city. ○ Greater understanding of good practice from elsewhere on these islands, and applicability of aspects to Belfast. ○ Agreement of a Good Relations engagement charter for funded projects, staff and elected members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Belfast recognised on these islands as a city of good practice for supporting greater cohesion. ○ Increased understanding of the importance of dialogue and relationships in supporting solutions to sensitive issues. ○ Optimum levels of cohesion applying agreed cohesion indicators.

Activities for this period will be consistent with current and any new T:BUC themes.

MEASUREMENT FOR COHESION

Over the course of the Strategy, there will be a review of the Shared City Partnership. The Shared City Partnership will have the key good relations and cohesion leadership role for the city.

As part of this review, the Shared City Partnership will, through its members drawn from Council, key public agencies, faith and community organisations, provide challenge to the Council and advocate for a more cohesive city.

It will also develop a cohesion framework for the city.

This framework for cohesion and belonging in Belfast is yet to be developed. As part of our focus on transformative rather than performative activities, and an outcome-based focus, the framework is anticipated to include agreed measurement indicators and an agreed working template that will be:

- 0 Capable of replication annually or more realistically in a three or five-year basis.
- 0 Adaptable, including being open to other aspects of good practice.
- 0 Provide headline assessments behind which are more extensive data and statistics, most of which are already available to public agencies and government, local or central.
- 0 Supportive of cross-agency collaboration given the interplay of the key statistics.
- 0 Open to oversight that a cross-sectoral organisation such as The Shared City Partnership can lead.

While yet to be agreed by those public agencies, the Council, community and faith representatives of the Shared City Partnership, the key cohesion and belonging themes may include:

1. Education and work.
2. Health and housing.
3. Trust and safety.
4. Relations and culture.
5. Community and social links.

Avoiding numerous and overly complex data is important by prioritising the headline data that is key for cohesion in the city. The indicators also will be consistent with The Executive Office good relations indicators.

Themes and Indicators for Belfast as a Cohesive City

Good Relations or, better defined in the context of this strategy as indicators for cohesion or/and integration, need to be discussed and agreed with the Shared City Partnership. The Partnership, on a cross-sectoral and inter agency basis will agree to monitor and report on the indicators each year.

As a result, the indicators will contribute to The Executive Office being able to measure the progress of T:BUC while also setting a parameter and baseline for Belfast as an increasingly cohesive city.

These indicators are suggestions only relating to the key agencies on the Partnership, and as indicators on cohesion beyond good relations.

There could be any number of indicators. The larger the number of indicators might increase confusion but may also increase accuracy.

Theme	Indicator
Education and work	% of students and young people in substantial relationships with students and young people from other community backgrounds % achieving agreed education outcomes for established and newcomer communities % satisfied with current employment or/and who are working across communities
Health and housing	% engaging in leisure activities or/and across communities % registered with a vital health professional % in secure owner-occupied residency or/and with stable tenancy
Trust and safety	% who trust key agencies % feeling fearful or insecure % confident of reporting hate-related incidents/crimes % victims of hate related incidents or crime Numbers of race hate incidents and crimes
Relationships and culture	% of people with friends from different cultural identity backgrounds % who are comfortable with diversity

	% who feel their culture is respected
Community and social links	% who feel secure visiting traditionally 'other' facilities or types of cultural expression
	% who report a sense of belonging
	% participating in community activities.

There are many other indicators that could be included and that will be considered by the Partnership. These include:

- % young people socialising or playing sport with people from other community backgrounds.
- % people who are monitored for use of facilities beyond leisure centres such as libraries and parks.
- % who feel they have an influence on decisions affecting them
- Numbers of peace barriers.
- % who want to remove peace barriers now or in the future.

The Council is engaging with Queens University and the Global Peace Index Network on developing a framework for the assessment of a positive peace index for Belfast, which will greatly assist and underpin these indicators.

MONITORING EVALUATION AND REVIEWING

The Shared City Partnership will produce an agreed monitoring and evaluation framework for cohesion and belonging, including critical targets, timeframes and monitoring information required.

Key monitoring and evaluation themes will include:

- o Awareness of others and improved attitude and behaviour of communities toward others and towards public agencies and government.
- o Improved sense of belonging of participants in their own communities.
- o Further enhanced trust of public agencies across the community.
- o Enhanced health and well-being.
- o Education and work.

Monitoring will be built into the planning stages of all activities to facilitate baseline measurement, the agreement of indicators, and agreement on how the information is collected by staff or strategic partners.

As such, each year the Partnership will oversee a baseline audit of key statistics for each programme to provide a snapshot of attitudes relevant to the target group for each programme.

The Shared City Partnership will provide an annual assessment of cohesion in the city to full Council including progress and barriers to progress.

The Shared City Partnership will provide regular challenge to Council and other public agencies.

The Council will work alongside Queens University and the Global Peace Index Network on developing a framework for the assessment of a positive peace index for Belfast.

CONCLUSION

This new Good Relations strategy flows directly from the new Good Relations and Cohesion Audit for Belfast which was undertaken throughout 2025. These are exciting additions to the previous audits, strategies and programmes, complementing existing successful delivery and adding value to existing good practice in the city.

More than adding value however, this new Strategy embodies a desire to move the work on Good Relations into a new direction, with a focus on those key issues that are relevant for today: tackling issues around social justice and reducing sectarianism and racism – all within a renewed focus on building reconciliation.

Belfast City Council can be proud of what it has achieved in its good relations work. Community workers on-the-ground on all sides of the community deserve great credit for courageous and often groundbreaking work they undertake often in association with Council.

This Strategy aims to build on that work, going beyond a currently defined good relations approach, toward a focus on cohesion, belonging and promoting a positive peace.

The five pillars include a real focus on ensuring communities with most social and economic needs are front and central to delivery:

- 0 Redefining and refreshing good relations work toward robust transformative not performative actions.
- 0 Increasing and enhancing capacity of all involved from different sectors.
- 0 Building trust in key institutions.
- 0 Concentrating on social justice needs that exist across communities using commonalities as an enabler of good relations and cohesion.
- 0 Actively demonstrating increased openness and transparency.

These pillars will all work within the key themes of any new T:BUC strategy.

By focusing on outcomes such as the five pillars in the strategy, the indicators and monitoring processes will flow naturally.

The Strategy identifies that sustainable change is important. Seeking change in skills and behaviour will have impact for many years. Furthermore, improving relationships or changing the way decisions are taken now to support an intercultural future for the city will leave a legacy for years to come.

The Strategy identifies and directly embraces the issues that still exist. It will involve people, led by communities, in acknowledging those issues from the past that are still to be addressed, in the context of new challenges in the present, for the benefit of the city in the future.

These issues, along with the direction of the new Strategy, go beyond good relations to embrace long-term cohesion with sustainable, systemic outcomes that will help

transform the city, and how Council delivers good relations and cohesion, for the future.

APPENDICES

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The strategic priorities for this new strategy are:

Our Children and Young People	Our Safe Community	Our Shared Community	Our Cultural Expression
All consistent with existing relevant regional and city policy agendas			
Actions <p>Contact programme developing initiatives between pupils, staff and governors of schools that prioritise understanding of the development of the city.</p> <p>Young leaders programme for existing youth leaders in communities targeting uniformed and non-uniformed youth organisations focusing on potential next generation of leaders and their response to changing demographics and new media.</p> <p>Small grants programme that will offer pilot three-year funding across all TBUC priorities with a priority on social justice commonalities.</p>	Actions <p>Minority ethnic equality, inclusion and integration programme including support for the continuation of the Ethnic Minority Forum.</p> <p>Interface Common Issues and Leadership programme developing joint initiatives.</p> <p>Small grants programme that will offer pilot three-year funding across all TBUC priorities with a priority on social justice commonalities.</p>	Actions <p>Review and reimagining of the role of the Shared City Partnership</p> <p>Delivery of a cultural awareness/competency training programme for decision-makers in key agencies including Council, SCP members and key community organisations.</p> <p>Trust-building initiative between communities and key public agencies.</p> <p>Exploration of good practice from across the islands to further develop thinking, policy and delivery relevant to Council staff and members.</p>	Actions <p>Supporting critical cultural expression activities including seeking alternatives to bonfires while encouraging lawful and respectful bonfires celebrations.</p> <p>Supporting critical cultural expression activities including around St. Patrick's Day celebrations attracting people from all communities including established and newcomer communities.</p> <p>Small grants programme that will offer pilot three-year funding across all TBUC priorities with a priority on social justice commonalities.</p>

		<p>Production of a 25-year strategy for cohesion in Belfast.</p> <p>Small grants programme that will offer pilot three-year funding across all TBUC priorities with a priority on social justice commonalities.</p>	
Results	Results	Results	Results
<p>Results are outlined in greater detail in the action plan. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engagement of traditionally excluded, disadvantaged, minority & people from different faiths including newcomer communities. ○ Enhanced sense of belonging. ○ More young people involved in good relations activities developing skills, changing behaviours or attitudes. ○ Greater collaboration between schools from different sectors. 	<p>Results are outlined in greater detail in the action plan. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Changed behaviour ○ Reduced anti-social behaviour ○ Reduced isolation ○ Enhanced health and well-being ○ More traditionally excluded people engaged ○ Increased trust in institutions ○ Recognised good practice and good news stories ○ Acknowledgement of positive diversity 	<p>Results are outlined in greater detail in the action plan. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased sense of belonging and a positive acknowledgement of difference. ○ Greater understanding of the benefits of interculturalism. ○ Greater inclusion of people from minority faith or cultural backgrounds. ○ Enhanced skills and knowledge. ○ Increased trust in institutions. ○ Changed behaviours and attitudes to others. 	<p>Results are outlined in greater detail in the action plan. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More quality, lawful cultural expression ○ Acknowledgement of, and respect for, different, lawful cultural expression ○ Increased sense of belonging and a positive acknowledgement of difference. ○ Greater understanding of the benefits of interculturalism.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Increased environmental awareness and actions.○ More interface and cross community active cooperation.○ Greater Council engagement in good relations across all departments.○ Better collaboration across public agencies promoting a more cohesive city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Better cross community and intercultural understanding, cooperation and trust.○ Greater inclusion of people from minority faith or cultural backgrounds.○ Enhanced skills and knowledge.○ Changed behaviours and attitudes to others.
Communication Objectives			
<p>Communication objectives include:</p> <p>Increase awareness.</p> <p>Greater knowledge of the diverse range of skills and knowledge gained through programme participation, promoting participation and the wider impact that builds community cohesion.</p> <p>Highlighting change perceptions and long-term benefits caused by the actions in the strategy.</p> <p>Promote awareness of strategy outcomes and changed focus through the strategy.</p> <p>Recognition of the positive funding as a key catalyst for better relations, promoting cohesion and belonging.</p> <p>Continuous promotion and awareness among local communities and stakeholders regarding the strategy and action plan activities, ensuring all stakeholders are aware of the long-term outcomes and impacts.</p>			

Outputs from initiatives that promote better relations.

Increased knowledge and understanding of, and support for, regional and city policies and strategies.

Innovation

The co-designed plan includes new and innovative approaches in the city including amongst other things:

- o Projects that will ensure decision-makers and public agencies align to a commitment to interculturalism.
- o Social justice projects that response to needs within a city where the common social justice needs cross interfaces and **disadvantaged communities**.
- o Investment that aligns with the overall strategic priorities of all public agencies and the TEO and the Belfast Agenda.
- o Delivery of programmes that develop skills and fosters collaborations across **interfaces and with disadvantaged communities**.
- o Delivery of programmes that draw on themes of cultural diversity, civic identity, health and wellbeing and many others.
- o Deliver innovative programmes that support training learning and skills development through, leadership programme and tackling issues associated with new media.
- o Programmes that collaborate with public agencies and community forums to ensure genuine cultural competence in decision-making given the changing demographic dynamics in the city.
- o Social cohesion: Provide relevant platform for participants to share stories, gain insight, and perspectives relating to conflict, recognition of minority communities, and addressing ongoing inclusion issues.

The Action Plan will help to address long standing social and economic challenges which have, and continue to, impact communities, particularly those in Belfast's interface communities.

Cultural Awareness/Competence

The advocacy for decision-makers including elected representatives to take cultural awareness/competence sessions is recommended as part of an induction process but also relevant for all people in a public agency engaging with people from different backgrounds or taking decisions that affect them. Such training could range from a half day session to university level. Below is a suggested programme for a half-day session given the time restraints placed on participants by other commitments.

Introduction to Cultural Awareness/Competence - for community stakeholders/statutory providers

A 2-3-hour interactive workshop should equip participants with some of the knowledge and skills required to work effectively with a diverse range of service users and to develop their cultural competency. It should give participants an understanding of:

- 0 Relevant terminology (e.g. culture, diversity, cultural awareness)
- 0 The role of culture in shaping personal identities and worldview
- 0 Personal perceptions and where they come from (e.g. media, political discourse)
- 0 Why cultural awareness is important
- 0 Things to consider when working with individuals from other cultures
- 0 Potential areas for misunderstanding
- 0 How to critically reflect on their views, knowledge and attitudes

Introduction to Cultural Awareness – for people seeking asylum

Interpreting costs for volunteer interpreters may be required.

A 2-3-hour interactive workshop should equip participants with some of the knowledge and skills required to engage and build relationships in their new community. It should give participants an insight into:

- 0 What culture/cultural diversity is
- 0 Why cultural awareness is important
- 0 Things which they may not know about cultural norms in NI

- 0 A brief explanation of the NI conflict and its ongoing impact
- 0 Potential areas for misunderstanding
- 0 The importance of learning English
- 0 What integration is and why it is key to building a good future

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BELFAST CITY COUNCIL
GOOD RELATIONS AUDIT 2026 - 2029

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- A Survey Link

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Belfast City Council's Good Relations audit was undertaken in 2025 and provides a foundation for the new 10-year good relations and cohesion strategy which has also been developed and adopted, for the period up to 2035. The good relations action plans will be developed from 2027 onwards as 3-year Action Plans, based on the findings from this audit.

While the city has been transformed in the time since the 1990s, some of the legacies of conflict, remain. That is not to say that good relations has not delivered during that time. It has. It has helped to transform relationships in the city and beyond, which has in turn created an environment for the whole of Belfast to meet a range of challenges. The united response at community level to the challenges of Covid, or the limitations placed on recent disorder linked to immigration, are examples of how good relations work spanning a generation, has cemented relationships, created new ambitions and facilitated new possibilities.

While recognising the successes of good relations within the Council since it was adopted as a key corporate objective in 2001, it is time to move on to a new, different iteration of good relations that reflects the current challenges of the 2020s. This is not a radical overhaul, but rather a shift beyond good relations (as known to date) towards sustainable, outcome-based transformation for the city and all its peoples and communities, delivering positive change for all on those lasting social issues that exist and still persist, in the city.

As a result of the new Good Relations and Cohesion Strategy, the Council expects to see many changes in the city. The city will develop a better understanding of interculturalism, its future as a city, and how to take decisions based on key issues and needs. Relationships will change for the better, and peoples' knowledge and behaviour will change. This will have a sustained impact on communities for many years.

All parts of the city will benefit, especially those areas and groups of people with greatest socio-economic need, isolation and exclusion. These are the areas that still suffer from the legacy and impact of the conflict, continued segregation and division.

Targets will be set for every project supported, linked to the vision and ambition of the Strategy. There is a commitment to assess all activities based on whether they make positive change (transformative versus performative) and fit the indicators that will be agreed by the Shared City Partnership.

The strategy includes new and innovative approaches in the city. It aims to make long-term and sustainable change to how the city supports, promotes and delivers cohesion.

Broadly, the strategy will include some or all of the following six key outcomes focused on relationships between people from different identities, faiths, cultures, opinions,

backgrounds, or between equality groups, through sustained cross community and intercultural contact. They are:

- 0 Continue to **repair and refine relations within a reconciliation lens and re-embolden** how those relations can improve the lives of people across the community.
- 0 **Develop capacity** to sustain and strengthen decision-making and project delivery across the community.
- 0 Ensure **greater openness and transparency** in decision-making and delivery.
- 0 Develop **trust in key institutions** by all people across the community. Key institutions relevant to social cohesion.
- 0 Deliver better and meaningful **social justice outcomes**, with a focus on those interface and disadvantaged areas that still suffer most from our divided society.
- 0 Develop an **overarching dynamic or sense of belonging for the city** to which all people can buy in.

The strategic pillars will be delivered within a context of an outcomes-based transformative vision which is why the monitoring and evaluation frameworks are emphasised. They will be developed hand-in-hand with the strategy and action plan as it is delivered.

The strategy and action plan (developed from this audit), therefore, stress transformative versus performative delivery – for staff, for partner agencies, for projects, and for elected members.

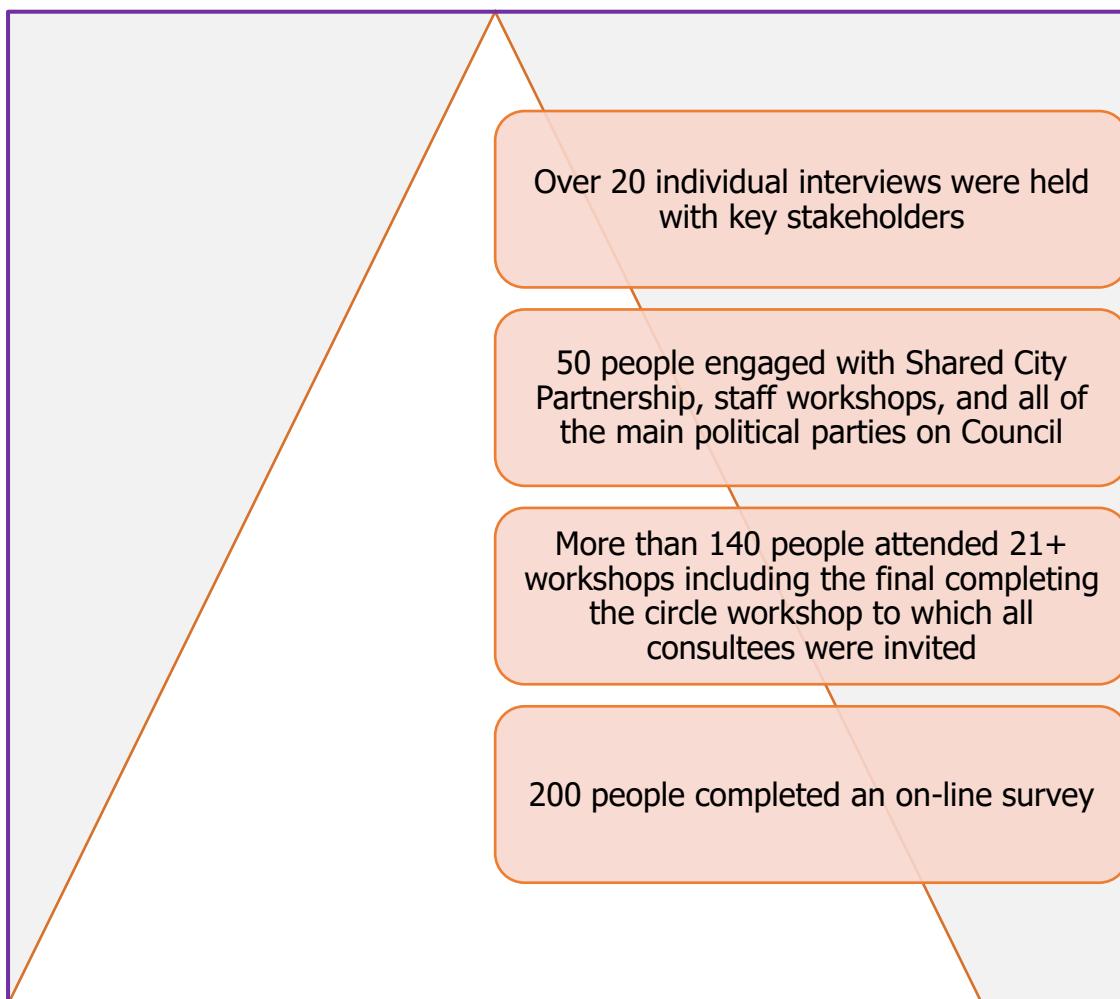
The strategy acknowledges the key challenges for the city going forward and represents a significant investment in long-term and systemic responses that will in the short-term develop relationships and greater cohesion; and change behaviours and attitudes; while supporting cohesion and a greater sense of belonging for people from all backgrounds inclusive of all section 75 groups.

BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

Overall, approximately 400 people participated in the consultation process, events and activities in the development of this new Good Relations Audit, such as attending any of 21+ workshops and/or completing a survey. All of the main political parties were consulted and interviews offered to all 60 elected members with an additional half-day open session for all elected members.

Activities included:

- 0 Workshops targeting minority and equality protected people and organisations.
- 0 One to one meetings where relevant.
- 0 Several sessions with Council staff.
- 0 Meetings with and further liaison with Sinn Féin, DUP, Alliance, UUP, SDLP, Green Party.
- 0 Offer of one-to-one interviews with all elected members and a half-day open session.
- 0 An on-line survey that could be data sliced by community, geographic area, community background, sector.



During the consultation, more than 400 direct engagements took place. The summary below highlights the key factors and feedback in that consultation, that then relate to the Audit.

Some of the key factors identified through the consultation are summarised here, but many also relate to the city's determination to respect the past but build a positive peace rather than just settle for a lack of violence (negative peace). These include issues related to equality and inclusion, socio-economic issues, and trust in institutions.

Ongoing segregation and division is particularly failing those residents who live at interface and disadvantaged areas. The Belfast Agenda highlights its vision of a city in which "no-one is left behind". The new Strategy and this Audit contains this as its central element. In the areas of deprivation, education and health, a person is significantly more disproportionately worse off, the closer they live to an interface, or peace barrier. Peace barriers are mostly located in North and West Belfast.

However, socio-economic issues and related cohesion targets and projects are also relevant for many communities in the city not at interfaces or close to peace barriers.

Key issues, amongst others, include:

- Disengaged young people.
- The impact of segregation linked to deprivation and issues of social justice.
- Managing the changing demography including newcomer residents, refugees and asylum seekers.
- Challenging racism and recognising degrees of sectarianism.
- Recognising and supporting the heritage and cultural expression of all people and communities in the city.

CONTEXT

Until the detail of the new TEO (T:BUC) strategy is known the Council's strategy will align with existing guidelines and strategic themes such as a focus on children and young people, shared communities, safer communities, and cultural expression. The Council is aware that the good relations budget is driven by the need to be consistent with the TEO strategic priorities as a partner funder in the delivery of the good relations programmes in Belfast. It is consistent with the racial equality strategy including the focus on reducing racism and prejudice and increasing participation.

The Council's new Strategy and Audit are also consistent with the Belfast Agenda community plan up to 2035 including its five themes of people and communities, economy, place, planet and compassion. It is also consistent with, and is informed by, other strategies including from outside Northern Ireland, such as the United Kingdom Integration Framework, the migrant integration strategy in Ireland, and other UK and Irish policies and strategies on integration and cohesion.

For example, one area of immediate and newsworthy concern is increasing visibility of racism and street disorder. Well publicised race hate incidents and crimes have been evident recently in the region and in Belfast. The potential impact of, and attitudes to, the very recently published Refugee Integration Strategy are explored.

In Northern Ireland as a whole, in 2024-2025 there was a significant increase in race hate motivated incidents and crimes - 1,807 incidents (an increase of 454 on the previous year) and 1,188 crimes (an increase of 349 on the previous year). There were nearly double the number of race hate incidents (1,807) than sectarian hate motivated incidents (910) and more race hate motivated crimes than all other hate related crimes put together: 1,188 compared to 947.¹

The statistics, as will be seen further, reflect wider challenges about attitudes to minority ethnic residents and a degree of Islamophobia, and speak to the need for managing racism and spin-off issues such as constructive use or unhelpful and at times unlawful misuse of on-line space and misinformation.

Good relations focuses primarily under Section 75(2) of the 1998 Northern Ireland Act on promoting positive relationships between people with different political opinions, racial background or religious beliefs.

Belfast City Council is one of, if not the, leading advocate for and deliverer of good relations work in Northern Ireland. Its status as the largest local authority with leadership from all political parties, and the quality and impact of its work on good relations to date, is widely recognised and very well regarded.

¹ PSNI report to NIPB June 2025

The City

Belfast has a population of 345,000 people according to the 2021 census, a rise of 3.5% since the 2011 census. Of these, in 2021, 18% were 14 years of age or under and 15% 65 years of age or older.

The national identities provided by people were 35% Irish, 27% British, and 17% Northern Irish, 12% a variance of multiple Irish/Northern Irish/British, and 10% providing a nationality outside these islands. Of these, 84% had always lived in Northern Ireland – of those that haven't 4% came to Northern Ireland before 2011, 4% 2002-2010, and 9% after 2011.

The statistics reflect a recent uplift of people living in the city who were born outside the islands, and may impact on attitudes to 'others' especially, as reflected later in the report on issues related to the amount of availability of social housing, security of tenure, access to services, increasing concerns about health and wellbeing issues especially in working class and interface communities, educational under-achievement, and the legacy of identity issues.

In terms of religion brought up in, 49% were Catholic, 36% Protestant, 3% other and 12% cited no religion.

More than a third (34%) of people did not own a vehicle while 24% had no qualifications.

On language, 15% had some ability in Irish and 7% some ability in Ulster Scots.

There was high incidence of rental housing – of all households 26% were in social housing and 21% private rental.

The electoral areas all vary according to many of the Belfast-wide indicators above. The detail of these is not provided in the audit but the demographic differences have been considered in assessing strategic direction.

Policy and Strategies

There are many relevant policies and strategies. This section provides a brief resumé of some including those relevant to the audit and strategy content that may be from outside Northern Ireland. This is also reflected in recommendations around learning for staff outside Northern Ireland especially relating to cultural competence and other Council's good practice relevant to the strategy.

The **Together: Building a United Community** (T:BUC) strategy is being reviewed but remains central to good relations strategies of Councils through The Executive Office which also provides up to 75% of funding toward Council programme implementation.

The T:BUC strategy was produced in 2013 and is currently being reviewed by The Executive Office. It has four over-arching strategic themes:

Our Children and Young People aims to continue to improve attitudes amongst our young people and to build a community where they can play a full and active role in building good relations.

Our Shared Community aims to create a community where division does not restrict the opportunities of individuals and where all areas are open and accessible to everyone. Specific actions include the creation of four urban villages and ten new shared neighbourhoods.

Our Safe Community aims to create a community where everyone feels safe in moving around and where life choices are not inhibited by fears about safety. Specific actions include working to build a culture where people feel comfortable to report when they have been the victim of intimidation or harassment and the creation of an interface barrier support package.

Our Cultural Expression aims to create a community, which promotes mutual respect and understanding, is strengthened by its diversity, and where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced.

These four strategic priorities are at the heart of Belfast City Council's new good relations strategy and audit and evidenced throughout.

The good relations indicators produced by The Executive Office are foundations for the indicators suggested for the Shared City Partnership. Council will adopt a new framework for measuring its impact, which embraces a focus on making Belfast a more cohesive city beyond the good relations indicators and challenging all sectors to contribute to the work as well as measuring impact.

As such, there is a *Whole Community, Whole Council* approach central to this new, Strategy and Audit.

The Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025 is also produced by The Executive Office. It has four specific outcomes:

Equality of service provision:

People from a minority ethnic background can access and benefit from all public services equally.

Elimination of prejudice, racism and hate crime:

Effective protection and redress is provided against all manifestations of racism and racist hate crime and a victim centred approach.

Increased participation, representation and belonging:

People from minority ethnic backgrounds participate in and are represented fully in all aspects of life – public, political, economic, social and cultural – and enjoy a shared sense of “belonging”.

Cultural diversity is celebrated:

The rights of people from minority ethnic backgrounds to maintain their culture and traditions in line with human rights norms and to pass them on to subsequent generations are recognised and supported.

Recent research from The Executive Office suggests that key barriers to integration include social inclusion, education issues, leadership in government, and lack of understanding. Many respondents to consultation on the draft strategy agreed with its vision, and that increasing engagement, involving community groups, and improving diversity, were important.

The Refugee Integration Strategy published May 2025 included a vision for ‘a cohesive and shared society where people seeking protection are valued and feel safe, are integrated into communities and are supported to reach their full potential’.

The strategy has four high-level outcomes which are as follows:

Outcomes

- 1: People who seek asylum and refuge are valued and respected.

People who seek asylum and refuge are respected as members of our communities and their presence, knowledge and contribution to society is recognised and valued.

- 2: People who seek asylum and refuge are safe and feel secure.

People who seek asylum and refuge feel welcome and live here safely without fear of persecution or discrimination resulting from their immigration status outcome.

- 3: People who seek asylum and refuge exercise their rights and responsibilities.

People who seek asylum and refuge are integrated into diverse and inclusive communities and are aware of and able to exercise their rights and responsibilities.

- 4: People who seek asylum and refuge are supported to achieve their full potential.

People who seek asylum and refuge have access to services and support to achieve their full potential.

Belfast City Council's community plan is called the **Belfast Agenda** and seeks to support communities and other public agencies to make Belfast better under four themes: Our People and Communities, Our Planet, Our Economy. While cohesion is not an explicit pillar of the community plan, it is important that that the new Cohesion and Good Relations Strategy and Audit are consistent with the Belfast Agenda. The strategy fits the timeframe of the Belfast Agenda, until 2035, and suggests cohesion may play a larger role in the community plan when that strategy comes to be renewed.



The **Equality Commission**

recommends, on race equality, that the NI Executive, Departments and other key stakeholders take priority action in the following areas, including via the proposed Racial Equality Strategy (RES):

- o Reform of the law, to address key shortfalls in legal protections.
- o Tackling Prejudicial Attitudes, Racism and Hate Crime.
- o Ensuring equality of opportunity in education, employment, accommodation, healthcare and access to social welfare.
- o Ensuring effective monitoring and evaluation, supported by robust data collection.

For Belfast City Council the key recommendations are to tackle prejudice, robust monitoring and a similar attitude toward social justice issues.

The strategy for **black and minority ethnic inclusion** in Ireland focuses on full participation in all areas of society, recognition of cultural diversity and the elimination of racism. Themes and dimensions for the strategy include:

- o Respect, ensuring relationships of care between people and communities.
- o Representation, that people from minority ethnic communities have a say in decisions.
- o Recognition for cultural diversity that are flexible to needs.
- o Access to key resources, including employment, education and health as well as cultural spaces.²

² Black and Minority Ethnic Inclusion 2021-2026, p7

The Irish Traveller and Roma Inclusion strategy emphasises the need to protect cultural identity, education and employment, anti-discrimination and equality, and children and youth. Traveller and Roma communities preferred to emphasise inclusion as well as integration in how they are involved in activities.

As with the strategy for inclusion of people from minority ethnic backgrounds key issues include engagement, involvement, access to resources, personal development and visibility and valuing of diversity.

A recent report *Inequalities Experienced by Black, Asian, Ethnic and Traveller people residing in Belfast*, produced by Belfast City Council, highlighted that:

- o There were significant housing issues especially accessing accommodation and overcrowding.
- o Mobility in the city is low.
- o While initial response by police was regarded as positive, criminal justice and other outcomes from the PSNI were regarded as poor.
- o People reporting hate crimes are disinclined to do so again due to unsatisfactory outcomes.
- o Trust in the political system was low.
- o Women are restricted in the labour market due to lack of access to child care.
- o Unemployment in the target group was partly due to discrimination.
- o Language was a barrier to communication between parents and schools.³

The United Kingdom **Indicators of Integration Framework**, 2018, identifies four headings each with a variety of domains, for measuring the degree of integration, monitoring effectiveness and delivery. The headings (markers and means, social connections, facilitators, and foundation) include domains such as education, leisure, work and housing, bonds, culture, safety and stability, as well as a foundation of citizen rights and responsibilities. The full list of indicators is included as an appendix.

These indicators assume an outcome-based approach to developing integration policy and within the framework many indicators are highlighted that may be relevant to the new Good Relations Strategy and Audit, based on building a positive peace with a focus on cohesion and belonging.⁴

³ Inequalities Experienced by BME and Traveller people in Belfast, 29025, pp44-46

⁴ UK Indicators of Integration framework, p15



Positive Peace

One of the challenges of the last 25 years has been to move Ireland and Northern Ireland from a negative peace (the absence of violence) to a positive peace (creating positive attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peace).

According to the Global Peace Index, the eight pillars of creating a positive peace include six that are directly relevant to the wider context of peacebuilding. The six most impactful pillars for the Council's Good Relations work are outlined below via the footnotes.

The other two of the eight pillars are low levels of corruption and a sound business environment.⁵

Additionally, peacebuilding and reconciliation are recognised as highly cost-effective activities while requiring ongoing investment. It is estimated that the cost of not undertaking peacebuilding is x16 given subsequent likely social, economic and security costs.⁶

A positive peace, therefore, in also acknowledging the cost-effective nature of reconciliation work, leads to knock-on desirable socio-economic benefits including economic performance, social inclusion and more ambitious policy making.

A recent report from Queen's University suggests that The Executive Office should incorporate a Positive Peace process in to the review of the Together: Building a United Community strategy stressing its multi-dimensional systemic quality, cross-Departmental collaboration, a whole government approach and that can address complex factors impacting positive peace. This includes, as indicated above, issues such as socio-economic need, social justice, equality and openness.⁷

The nature of the positive peace outline suggests a focused role for the Shared City Partnership, something that Belfast City Council has been 'ahead of the game' on for many years.

PEACEPLUS Programme

The strategic context for the PEACE Programme is important and sometimes overlooked. It was the PEACE Programme that generated one of the best definitions yet of reconciliation that is at the heart of its delivery and has resonance for other related programmes including on good relations. These reconciliation criteria are:

1. Developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society

Challenging political and civic leaders to agree a vision of a shared future requiring the involvement of the whole society, and which is interdependent, just, equitable,

⁵ Global Peace Index, 2019

⁶ Global Peace Index calculation, 2019

⁷ Thompson et al, Queen's University Belfast p8, 2025

open and diverse.

2. Acknowledging and dealing with the past

Acknowledging the hurt, losses, truths and suffering of the past including individuals and institutions.

3. Building positive relationships

Relationship building or renewal following violent conflict addressing issues of trust, prejudice, intolerance in this process, resulting in accepting commonalities and differences, and embracing and engaging with those who are different.

4. Significant cultural and attitudinal change

Changes in how people relate to, and their attitudes towards, one another where each citizen becomes an active participant in society and feels a sense of belonging.

5. Substantial social, economic and political change

The social, economic and political structures which gave rise to the conflict and estrangement are identified, reconstructed or addressed, and transformed.

Good relations and cohesion is an important part of the reconciliation process in the city therefore, which is more than just about cross community relationships. The impact of economic and social deprivation, changing structures that estranged people, encouraging a sense of belonging of all including those people and communities feeling estranged (before, during or after the conflict), acknowledgement and a common vision, are all critical elements.

These are also important for Belfast in 2025 just as they were in 1995 when the PEACE programme started; and Belfast has unique challenges given its location and the impact of the Troubles. This iteration of the PEACE programme therefore should explore the benefits and challenges of a changing demography and bring a new lens on what peace and reconciliation may look like in the years ahead.

Perhaps just as significantly, the Hamber and Kelly definition also recognises the reconciliation paradox in the conflict between an acknowledgement of a painful and harmful past while searching for a longer term and interdependent future.⁸

As the cohesion strategy, exploring all section 75 categories focuses on challenging racism and sectarianism the definitions of each are important.

Racism

Racism is defined in many ways in different sources, but the fundamentals come back to:

- Feelings of inherent superiority based on background.
- Prejudice and disrespect.
- The continued play out of issues at a local level through things like graffiti and vocalisation of prejudice.

⁸ A Working Definition of Reconciliation, Hamber and Kelly, 2004, p4

- o Systemic or institutional racism developed sometimes over a prolonged period.
- o Subsequent issues around decision-making processes, lack of involvement in decision-making and lack of recognition of contributions made.

As a result, the new Strategy and Audit includes reference to:

- Systems and procedures by agencies and others that may include unconscious bias.
- Capacity building to address every day, or systemic, racism and sectarianism and how they impact people.
- Identification of role models.
- Dialogues on the consequence of racism and how to challenge it.

Sectarianism

Sectarianism is defined in many ways in different sources, but the fundamentals come back to:

- o Narrow-minded or parochial attitudes toward people of different faith beliefs;
- o Being confined to the limits of a particular denomination or being biased toward people and beliefs of a particular denomination.
- o Sectarianism in Ireland is often related to people from a Protestant or Catholic background but could equally relate to differences between people of other faith backgrounds.
- o There are often links from the denomination to other cultural, historical and political differences.

As a result, the Strategy and Audit includes reference to:

- Inter faith collaboration because while there can be a diluted relationship between religion and political, historical and cultural differences, nevertheless it can still play a part even if those differences are increasingly less clear in a city such as Belfast.
- Parochialism or limited engagement and loyalty locally is important to sectarianism, and so the benefit of looking beyond the local and exploring good practice elsewhere can be important.

Learning from Elsewhere

In many ways communities struggle, not just with conflict or significant violence, but with exclusion, prejudice, and segregation. The issues that are relevant in one region are not necessarily the same as other regions, but the causes and ameliorations can be similar – and the good practice that helps deal with the problems arising from segregation, prejudice and exclusion can often be relevant in different regions.

Sectarianism and racism, and violence associated with sectarianism and racism, are not unique to Northern Ireland and Ireland. Nor are the consequences or solutions.

Indeed, sectarian violence and exclusions occurred on a much greater scale in other parts of the world. While Ireland and Northern Ireland was experiencing sectarian violence in the 1920s, 1940s and 1970s millions of people were killed and experienced systemic discrimination arising from conflicts and sectarian violence in Greece, Turkey,

India, East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and West Pakistan, Eastern Europe and many other countries and regions.

The consequence of conflict in these regions are still relevant and are manifest also in Britain today where immigration in the last century presented challenges of integrating those communities that came to Britain from some of the countries experiencing traumatic change; and where demographic change continues to confront policy makers and service deliverers.

As such, in Britain local authorities are often ahead of the game in promoting cohesion and diversity; in dealing with the reconciliation paradox of addressing the causes of conflict in the past to acknowledge hurt and facilitate better relations now; in identifying and improving systemic issues of inequality and discrimination; in developing skills; and in both accepting the rights of others and indeed of accepting the concept of otherness broadly.

Belfast can learn from such local authorities, but the learning is mutual as they in turn can explore how local authorities address deep-seated issues of prejudice and segregation here.

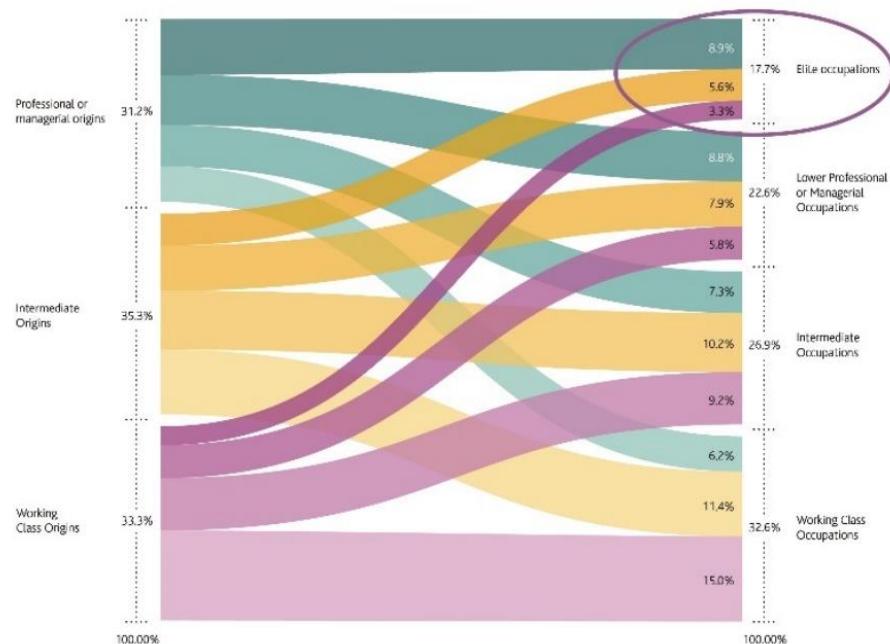
Good practice visits to other areas could explore:

1. Cohesive societies and the challenges in urban Britain.
2. How Council areas that are more diverse than Belfast, such as Birmingham address issues of segregation, race relations, systemic discrimination, and exclusion. Birmingham City Council is an advocate of the Class Ceiling approach referenced below.
3. Good practice projects and programmes that work.

A visit may include:

- o Visit to and meeting with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Cohesion and Diversity, officials and Mayors of the Council.
- o Exploration of how segregation and prejudice are manifested.
- o Meetings with cohesion and diversity officers and practitioners from the Council and other agencies.
- o Exploration of managing multi-agency approaches to improving cohesion and diversity.
- o Meetings with faith leaders.
- o Visits to community projects of good practice working on good relations and cohesion.

In addition, good practice visits may engage with projects such as the *Class Ceiling* research supported by Councils that demonstrate how a coordinated approach can help people from working class communities including within divided communities move in to higher echelons of work.⁹



Other Policies and Commitments of Relevance to the City and Region

EU Green Deal

The European Green Deal sets out a range of policy initiatives to make Europe carbon neutral by 2050. The strategy contains commitment to support environment projects that may combat climate change and encourage community responses to environment challenges. This will include raising skills and knowledge on climate change.

Territorial Agenda 2030

The new Strategy and Audit includes potential North-South co-operation through exploration of good practice and applicability across the islands north-south and east-west in line with the Good Friday Agreement.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty that grants all children & young people (aged 17 & under) a comprehensive set of rights.

"That every child has the right to rest & leisure, to engage in play & recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child & to participate freely in cultural life & the arts." Children and young people are a core part of the strategy and many projects that will be supported within it.

UN Resolution 1325 on Women and Peacebuilding

The new Strategy and Audit acknowledges the importance of this resolution and will ensure that women and women's projects are supported, explicitly including greater visibility and leadership of women in peacebuilding initiatives.

⁹ Laurinson et al, The Class Ceiling: Social Mobility and why it pays to be privileged

NI Programme for Government

The Audit and new Strategy has the potential to make a substantial contribution to the following Programme for Government (PfG) outcomes on enjoying long, healthy, active lives; a more equal society; a confident, welcoming, outward looking society; and in creating a community where division does not restrict life opportunities of individuals & where all areas are open & accessible to everyone; a community where everyone feels safe in moving around & where life choices are not inhibited by fears around safety; to promote a community, which promotes mutual respect & understanding, is strengthened by its diversity & where cultural expression is celebrated & embraced.

These feature of the Programme for Government are also features of the strategy.

Key Issues

Key issues in this section include:

- 0 Belfast is a vibrant city, increasing in size with a diverse population including minority populations of people from a Catholic and Protestant background, minority national identities, and some (10%) increase in people coming to live in the city from outside these islands in the last ten years.
- 0 There are significant numbers of people in rented accommodation, with no/low qualifications and with less access to a vehicle or make practical choices to use private transport due to availability of public options.
- 0 Various government policies and strategies prioritise belonging, cohesion and participation.
- 0 Hate crime has significantly increased with the number of race hate related incidents and crimes in Northern Ireland being more than all other hate related categories put together.
- 0 Celebrating cultural identity and broadening participation is a regular theme across government and policies.
- 0 Reconciliation definitions over the last generation have stressed the importance of structures and systems, vision, leadership, interdependence, positive relations, and the interconnectedness of social and economic issues.
- 0 Capacity building is an ongoing need. That may also include building capacity to identify structural change needs and cultural awareness or competence in making decisions within a demographically changing city.
- 0 Often people from working class communities are less enfranchised to fulfil their potential.

- 0 Agencies such as the Equality Commission stress the importance of equality of opportunity in education, employment, accommodation, healthcare and access to social welfare.
- 0 In Ireland the strategy for black and minority ethnic inclusion advocates for people from minority backgrounds to have a say in decisions.
- 0 The UK Indicators of Integration stress outcomes such as community bonds, safety and stability is important foundations of a citizen's rights and responsibilities.
- 0 Belfast City Council recognises already that trust in the political system is low.
- 0 Overcoming parochial outlooks contributes to constructive attitudes toward sectarianism and racism.
- 0 Bias may also include unconscious bias because of lack of familiarity or knowledge.
- 0 The economic benefit from a cohesive approach is reinforced by the positive peace global indices stress the need to prevent problems before they become major issues, which could save x16 more than allowing cohesion and good relations issues to fester.
- 0 Building a positive peace (as opposed to just the absence of violence) includes a range of factors including issues such as trust in government, building capacity, and openness and transparency, as well as good relations – all important for building cohesion.
- 0 Many indicators from government already exist including for good relations, cohesion and integration of relevance to cities, regions and more broadly across these islands.
- 0 Many of these indicators also stress the importance of finding commonalities while embracing diversity.
- 0 The positive peace indicators stress the cost-effective nature of reconciliation and prevention work.

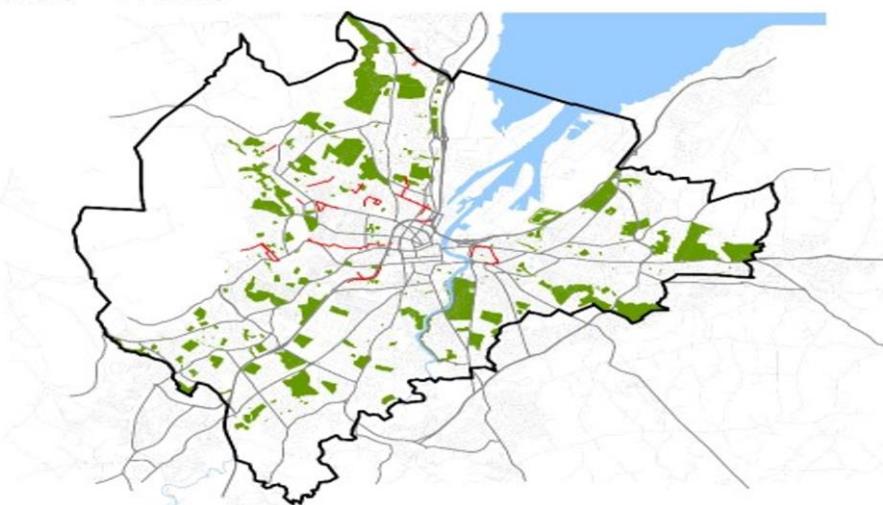
STATISTICS

Some of the key statistics for the city, especially where there is greatest socio-economic need is provided.

The maps below are provided in other research, but we consider them relevant and important for the new Audit and Strategy. They also remind that while there is considerable need at and around interfaces, there is also a need within communities that are not at interfaces and are in the suburbs sometimes in larger areas that do not have indications of significant socio-economic need.



The physical legacy of conflict: “peace” walls



Patterns of segregation and division have not improved since the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement in 1998. Ongoing segregation and division continues to manifest itself in the physical fabric of our city, where upwards of 95 physical barriers continue to separate communities from each other. Residential segregation hasn't improved, with around 94% of social housing in Belfast either predominantly Catholic or Protestant.

In 2017, the Ulster University produced a number of Policy Briefs. In one, it explored the Socio-economic, education and employment factors pertaining to those who live at interface areas.

<https://www.communityrelations.org.uk/files/communityrelations/media-files/Policy%20Brief%205%20Peacewalls.pdf>

Some of the key elements of their general findings included that:

- 0 Of those who live adjacent to an interface or Peace Wall, 65% of these are from a Catholic background and 27% are from a Protestant background.

- 0 70% of all politically motivated murders in Belfast between 1996 and 2001 occurred within 500 metres of an interface barrier.
- 0 Those individuals living near a peace barrier are more likely to have had direct experience of violence than their counterparts living elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

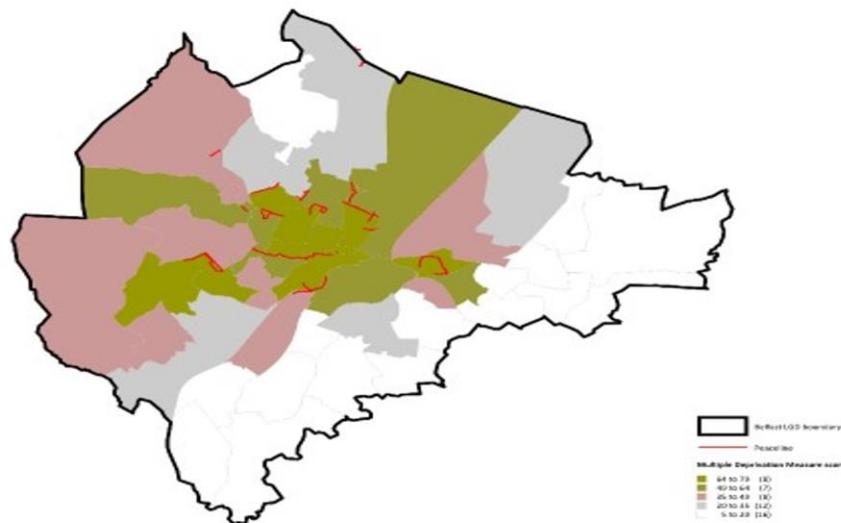
Deprivation

The study then looked at the direct link between interface areas and deprivation.

- 0 Communities living on an urban interface such as the Falls, Shankill, Ardoyne, Crumlin Road, New Lodge, Springfield Road and Duncairn (all of which are in North and West Belfast) comprise 14 of the 20 most deprived wards in Northern Ireland (70%). Essentially, these statistics capture the challenge in attempting to interpret a relationship in the form of 'causation' between peace walls and increased rates of deprivation.
- 0 While facing a similar myriad of interlinked social problems, Northern Ireland also faces the added dynamic of widespread residential physical segregation and the legacy of an ethno-national conflict. Hargie et al. (2006, 2011) have referred to this juxtaposition of 'ordinary' social and economic deprivation with segregation and sectarianism facing those who live in interface areas as a 'double penalty'. It is of little surprise therefore that: "The most socially deprived areas in Belfast are also areas where "peace walls" or interfaces between communities are prominent, are areas of lowest educational attainment with the fewest number of children and young people progressing into third level education and are places where youth unemployment runs highest" (Browne and Dwyer, 2014, p.800).
- 0 This social and economic deprivation appears to apply at both an individual/household and a communal level. In relation to the former, the 'Cost of the Troubles' study found that "The group with the highest intensity of violence (experience) was also characterised by households with extremely low incomes" (Morrissey et al., 1999, p.106).
- 0 Those with 'high' levels of personal experience of the 'Troubles' were 1.85 times more likely to have lived in poverty in the past, 1.16 times more likely to state they are poor 'sometimes' or 'all the time', and 1.76 times more likely to lack three or more essential items most people take for granted as they 'cannot afford them'



Deprivation levels across the city



The correlation between the location of interface areas, or Peace Walls, and the highest area of deprivation is clearly displayed here above.

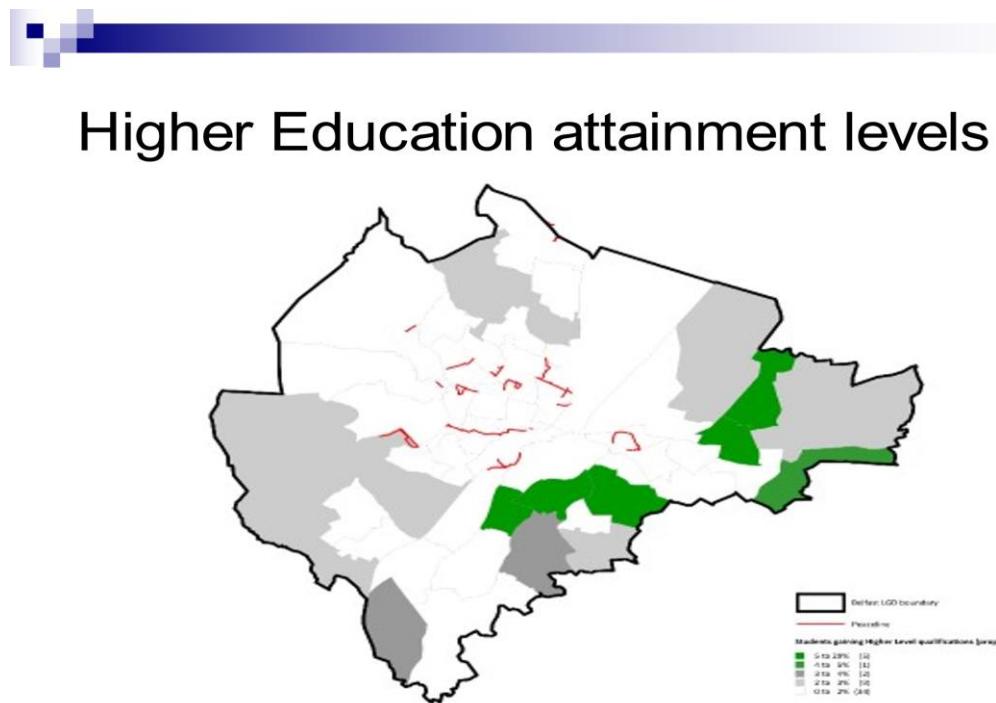
Education

When it came to educational attainment, young people who live at interface areas or close to peace barriers are at a significant disadvantage. The policy brief noted:

- 0 School leavers from areas in the highest deprivation quintile had a 53.5% chance of obtaining good GCSE passes, and a 28.9% chance of getting good A-level passes, compared to 68.6% and 40.7%, respectively, for school leavers from areas in the lowest deprivation quintile.
- 0 In their study of the 'social ecological risks' to educational achievement in Northern Ireland, Goeke-Morey et al. (2012, p.249) drew upon data on 770 adolescents that found, "A family environment high in-conflict and low-in-cohesion was the sole environmental predictor of poorer academic achievement." They suggest that "A peaceful home environment may provide youth both the instrumental and emotional support necessary for academic success, including emotional and biopsychological regulation, adaptive sleep patterns, a sense of emotional security, self-confidence, and a culture of achievement".
- 0 Two studies of young people living in interface communities in Belfast (Hargie et al., 2006) and Derry/Londonderry (Roche, 2008), found that unemployment and sectarianism were the two most important (and at times inter-linked) issues facing young adults. Hargie et al. found that young people were reluctant to venture outside of their own community due to a fear of what lay 'beyond the

wall'. This led to a 'bubble syndrome' where unemployment passed from generation to generation in interface communities, and for many young people was viewed as the 'norm' (Hargie et al., 2006, 2011).

The image below is very visual representation of the clear relationship between poor educational progression and the reality of living in an interface area.



Health

In the policy brief referenced above, estimates suggest that 39% of people in Northern Ireland have experienced a conflict-related traumatic event and 16.9% witnessed a death or serious injury (O'Neill et al., 2014). Given the scale of the conflict (more than 3,600 deaths and 40,000 injured) it is perhaps unsurprising that the population at large tends to have poorer levels of mental health and higher levels of 'psychological discomfort' than both the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland (O'Reilly and Stevenson, 2003; Murphy and Lloyd, 2007; Murphy, 2008; Bunting et al., 2011, 2013; Wang et al., 2011). If, as stated above, 70% of conflict related incidents occurred within 500 metres of an interface barrier, then this means that this is significantly magnified for those living at an interface.

Worryingly, the levels of mental health in Northern Ireland appear to be even poorer than in other countries also emerging from protracted ethnic and political conflict (O'Neill et al., 2014; O'Connor and O'Neill, 2015). Furthermore, Mahedy et al. (2012, p.646) have contended that, "...it could be hypothesized that an underlying continuum dimension (sic) of anxiety and depression is present in the Northern Irish population."

The impact of the conflict and for those who live at interface areas is highlighted even further from the policy brief, with the following stark findings:

- 0 Tomlinson (2016) found that those individuals with high experience of the 'Troubles' were 2.65 times more likely to be at risk of mental illness than those with no such direct experience. The risk of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in particular is higher for those exposed to a conflict related traumatic event, as opposed to those individuals only exposed to a non-conflict related traumatic event (O'Neill et al., 2014). Indeed, Ferry et al. (2014) found that events that were characteristic of a violent conflict, including the unexpected death of a family member/loved one, witnessing a death or a dead body or someone being seriously injured, accounted for the highest proportion of the overall public health burden of PTSD (18.6, 9.4 and 7.8 %, respectively).
- 0 This built upon the findings of the 'Cost of the Troubles' study, which documented that approximately 30% of the 1,300 participants in the research suffered from the symptoms of PTSD (Morrissey et al., 1999). This included disturbed sleep, upsetting memories, overconsumption of alcohol and higher than average use of prescription drugs, all of which were more readily apparent amongst those residents who lived in areas where the violence was of a 'high-intensity', which inevitably is interface areas.
- 0 While anyone can suffer from PTSD regardless of where they live and depending upon their individual experience; given that much of the violence and most of the killings occurred within interface communities, it is plausible to surmise that those living in these communities are at greater risk of suffering from mental ill-health and/or PTSD. This would appear to be borne out in a recent large-scale study, which aimed to explicitly assess the potential for poor levels of mental health based upon residential proximity to interface barriers (see Maguire et al., 2016).
- 0 The study assessed health record data on 1.3 million individuals living in Northern Ireland and found that living in a neighbourhood segregated by a 'peace-line' increased the likelihood of using anti-depressants by 19%, and of anxiolytic medication by 39%. While a previous study (French, 2009) had suggested that it was segregation in and of itself which had an adverse effect on mental health, Maguire et al. in fact suggest that it is the proximity to an interface structure which is the much more significant factor in the use of prescription medicine and poorer levels of mental health.
- 0 They suggest that this is a crucial point to understand, as "Individuals living in areas with a segregation barrier are without doubt segregated, but it may be the built environment and the segregation infrastructure, not population composition per se, that is affecting mental health in these areas" (ibid., p.7).

- 0 Paradoxically therefore, while peace walls may provide local residents with a sense of security (Byrne et al., 2015), on another level they may also be impacting negatively upon their mental health.
- 0 There are two added issues to consider with regards to mental (ill)health, particularly relating to trauma. Firstly, poor mental health and trauma can often be transmitted inter-generationally (McAllister et al., 2009; Taylor et al., 2013), with the children of parents who had conflict related trauma more likely to display 'emotionality' and 'hyper-activity' in terms of their behaviour (Fargas-Malet and Dillenburger, 2016). Secondly, poor mental health and conflict related trauma is related to higher levels of self-harm, suicide ideation and the act of suicide itself (O'Neill et al., 2014). Perhaps more significantly, once again socio-economic status plays a significant role in increasing the likelihood of self-harm or suicide. Data indicates that between 2010-14, there were 8.4 deaths by suicide per 100,000 population for 0-19 year olds in the most socially and economically deprived areas in Northern Ireland. In the least deprived areas, the figure was 2.2 (NIE, 2016, p.44). In addition, between 2010/11 and 2014/15, there were 50.6 hospital admissions due to self-harm per 100,000 population for 0-19 year olds from the most deprived areas. For the least deprived areas, once more, the corresponding statistic was 22.4 (id.). Building upon these statistics, Cummings et al. (2016, p.16) have argued that: "Children and young people growing up in the participating interface areas were aware of and perhaps were more vulnerable to severe mental health issues. This in turn may be related to the risk for self-harm, such as self-mutilation, cutting, burning or purging. Thus, an increasing risk that youth must attempt to deal with is risk for higher levels of self-harm and/or suicide than may be the case in other types of neighbourhoods.

Building Good Relations including exploring social and economic issues, is a critical and essential requirement for the progress and success of Belfast in all its ambitions and outcomes.

The city is still segregated along religious and political lines and those who suffered most during the conflict, particularly those who live near interface areas, continue to suffer the most and are in danger of being left behind.

Good Relations and cohesion considerations and outcomes therefore should be front and centre of all of policy and service delivery activities, if they are to not only succeed, but also if they are to deliver meaningful change for those still directly impacted by the legacy of conflict, division and segregation.

One example of the community response to issues, though not where there is a physical peace barrier but where the local community believes it is being squeezed by redevelopment and by newcomer communities, is on Donegall Pass. Supported by The Urban Villages initiative Donegal Pass Community Enterprises carried out an audit of the area and produced a report on the changing nature of communities in South Belfast.

Their report was based on secondary research (70% of people in the area were born in Northern Ireland compared to 87% of people in NI as a whole) and direct feedback from residents ("to be honest the biggest issue in this area is housing" one resident, "the housing executive really needs to step in" another resident).

Key recommendations stress issues around housing equity, local leadership and capacity building, a youth provision study, issues around accessing local services, building trust and cultural exchanges, and activities in a good relations hub.¹⁰

The Carnegie UK Institute recently published a report showing that economic hardship was more prevalent in Northern Ireland than the rest of the United Kingdom. Amongst other conclusions for Northern Ireland that it draws are included:

- o More people in Northern Ireland face hardship than elsewhere in the UK especially those in social housing and on low incomes.
- o Democratic wellbeing remains lower in Northern Ireland and most people feel they cannot influence decisions that affect their lives, locally or regionally.
- o Environmental access is lowest for those on low incomes and younger people.¹¹

Key issues include:

- o More than three decades after ceasefires in 1994, there are as many peace barriers in the city though some have been reimagined or removed.
- o There has been significant success, easily overlooked, in the last decades in building relationships along with the positive progress made in ensuring political stability and the development of reconciliation.
- o Whether in local or central government, delivery should include a commitment toward 'transformative' dialogue and decision-making rather than 'performative' dialogue and decision-making.
- o There should be greater utilisation of an inter-section of good relations with social and economic issues of relevance to those areas where good relations efforts are most acute. For example education, physical and mental health and wellbeing, the environment or employability could be the type of issues that could deliver excellent, issue-based good relations work.
- o There is evidence linking lower educational achievement, young people going to third level education, and youth unemployment. There are also links between a family environment high in conflict, low cohesion and poor educational achievement.

¹⁰ Report on the Changing Nature of Communities in South Belfast, Donegall Pass Community Enterprises, May 2024, pp44-47

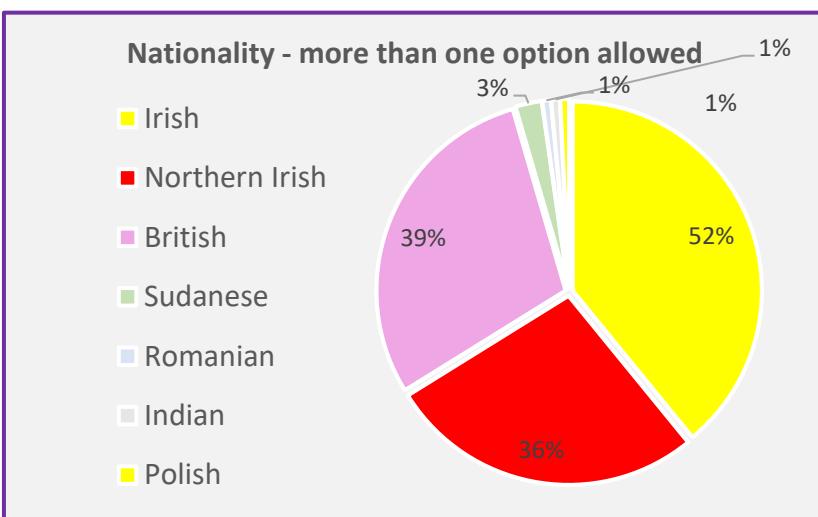
¹¹ Carnegie Institute UK, Economic Hardship in NI, 2025

- 0 Links have been made between higher levels of mental illness with people and communities with high experience of the Troubles. Separately people and neighbourhoods segregated by a peace barrier are 19% more likely to use anti-depressants and 39% more likely to use anxiolytic medication suggesting while may feel safer the structure may directly contribute to poorer levels of mental health.
- 0 Youth suicide rates in poorer areas appear higher than in other areas.
- 0 While still intending to encompass all aspects of work within a local government setting, the notion of good relations being integrated into the core work of a Council is still left on the periphery rather than as a central component.
- 0 While recognising the progress that has been made by those supporting good relations, Northern Ireland is still a highly segregated society epitomised by politics, cultural identity, faith and ethnicity.
- 0 New challenges, including for example demographic change, need to be better integrated into the good relations and social cohesion responses of government, local and central. However, these discussions should be about the organisation of services and resource scarcity rather than reinforcing a narrative that new communities are a drain on resources.
- 0 Recognising the increasing number and relative proportion of race hate incidents and crimes is important; while understanding the fear evident in all communities – from change, or being left behind, cultural loss, what people have come from or what reaction there will be to newcomers locally. There appears to be significant tensions around, for example, housing in relation to newcomer communities.
- 0 There has been significant success, easily overlooked, in the last decades in building relationships along with the positive progress made in ensuring political stability and the development of reconciliation.
- 0 Tensions around housing stress and lack of adequate service provision in NI are believed to be the main factors in the recent rise in hostility towards migrants and associated racist behaviour and crime.
- 0 The impact of social media and the level of misinformation which is widely circulated appears to be fuelling negative perceptions. While a proportion of this is believed to be a deliberate attempt to escalate tensions. much appears to be the result of fear or ignorance.
- 0 Whether in local or central government, delivery should include a commitment toward transformative dialogue and decision-making rather than 'performative' dialogue and decision-making.

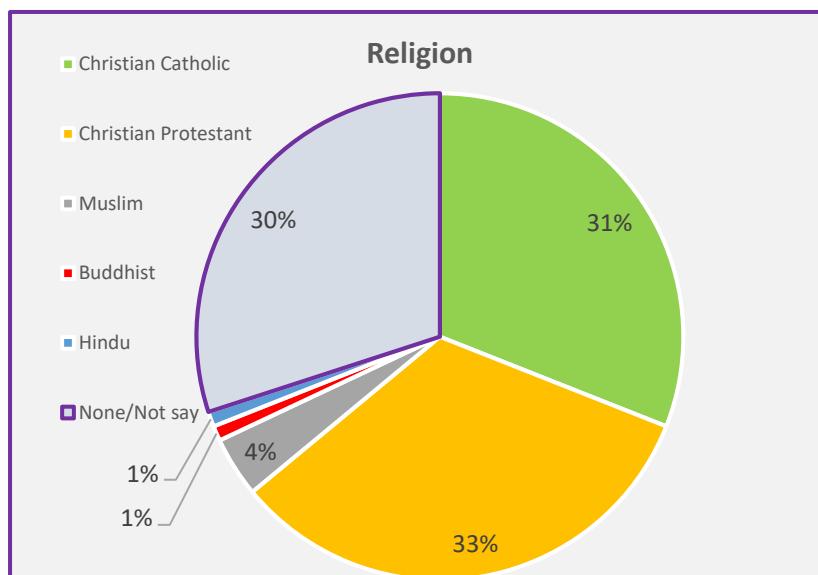
Some of these issues are applicable to Northern Ireland but are considered in the draft for relevance in Belfast.

SURVEY

During the audit more than 200 people returned a survey, a copy of which is included in the appendices. The survey provided a clear context and direction regarding issues raised, ideas to prioritise and issues that inhibit the development of good relations.



age bracket which reflects the returns for that category.



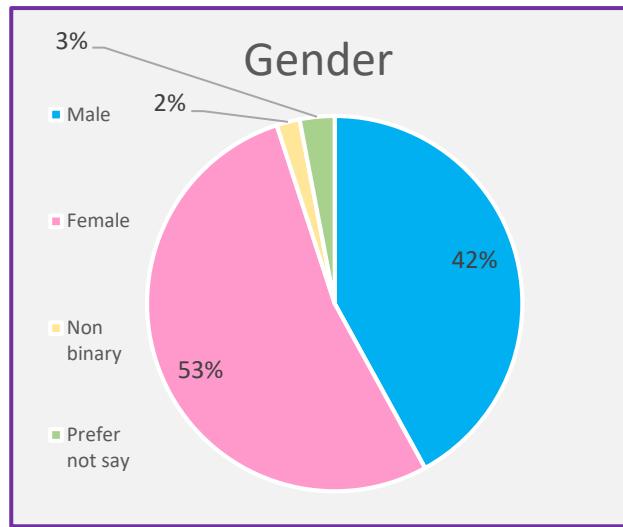
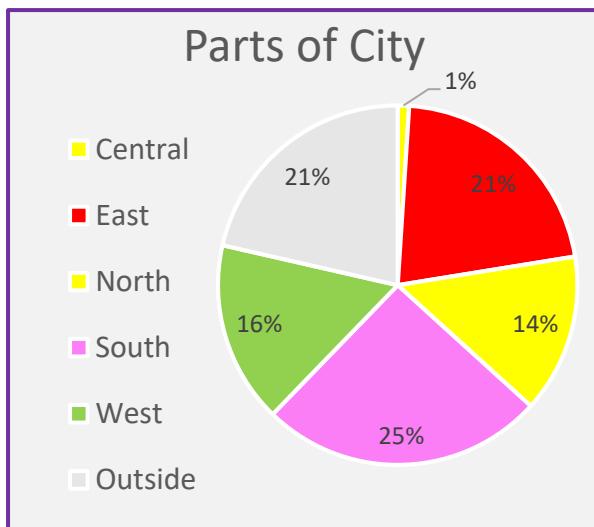
In addition, respondents' nationalities are self-defined, with more than one answer allowed (therefore the table below does not add up to 100%).

The religious profile is broadly reflective of the city. The number of young people completing the survey was fewer than the average population, but their opinions were further captured during outreach with younger people. Most people managing community projects are also in the 45-59-year-old



More women than men returned the survey, however, 41% male return rate is good and broadly reflective of the city.

While some replies came from people living outside the city the survey was completed generally proportionately by people from the North, South, East and West.

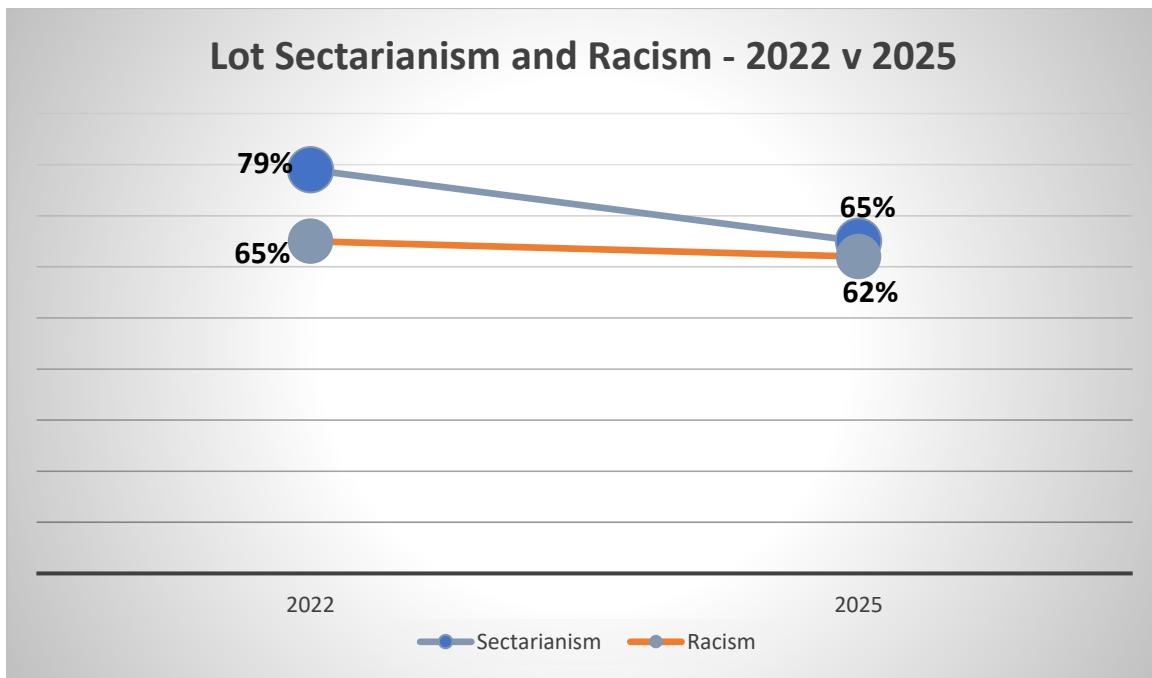


Given the demographic returns, we estimate in the survey responses overall a confidence rate of 94% and a margin of error of +/- 5%. High level results included:

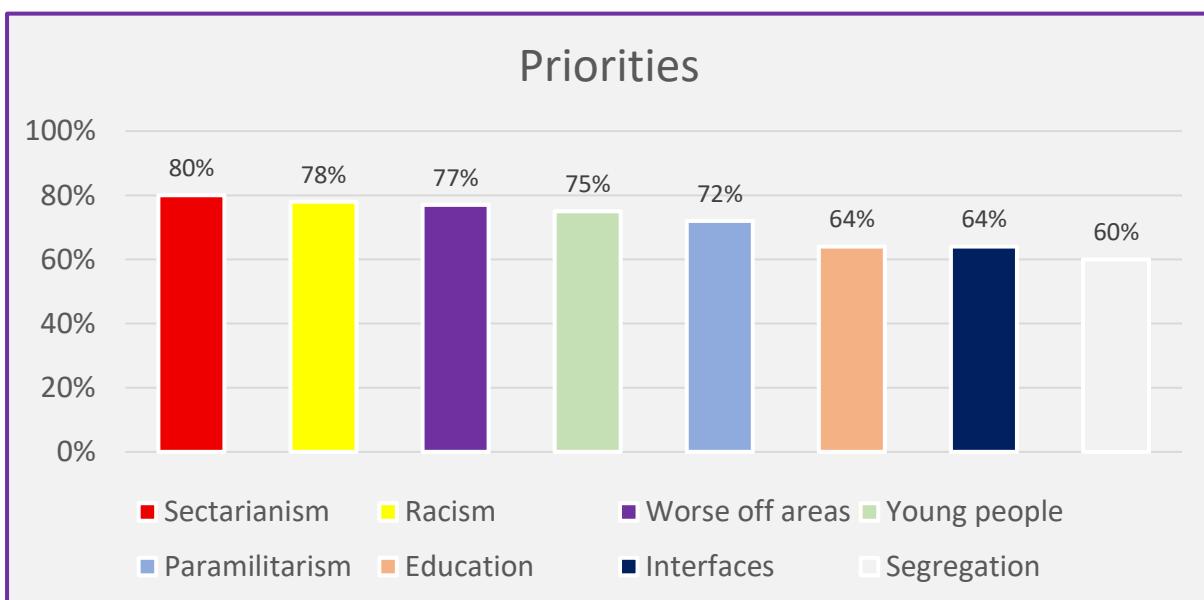
- 0 91% believe good relations are very important for the city but while 11% feel it is a very shared city 8% believe it is not at all shared - the majority (81%) feel it is a bit shared.
- 0 A significant number (42%) always feel a sense of belonging in the city compared to just 7% who never feel a sense of belonging – the balance, (51%), sometimes have a sense of belonging.
- 0 While 20% feel their cultural background is always respected, just 8% believe it not at all respected. The balance, (72%), believe it is sometimes respected.
- 0 22% believe they can always express their cultural identity compared to 13% who say they never can express their cultural identity – 66% sometimes can express their cultural identity.
- 0 Most people (65%) would like to see multi-annual grants being provided, 4% no grants and 8% just for one year.

There has been some improvement in the degree of racism and sectarianism perceived in the city from 2022, though still significant issues remain.

Most people still believe there to be substantial amounts of sectarianism and racism in the city.



Almost all respondents believed good relations was a very important part of what Council does (91%) – just 8% saying it was fairly important and 1% that it was not at all important.



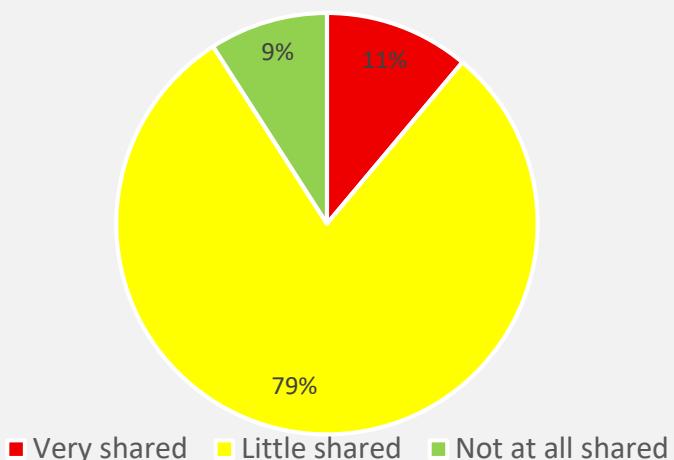
The key priorities for those replying were highlighted below – just the key priorities that scored most highly. A focus on educational under-achievement, socio-economic issues, interface communities and the important needs around challenging

sectarianism, racism and paramilitarism are all considered key priorities for the strategy.

While just 11% believe the city very shared, most (81%) believe it a little shared and 8% not at all shared.

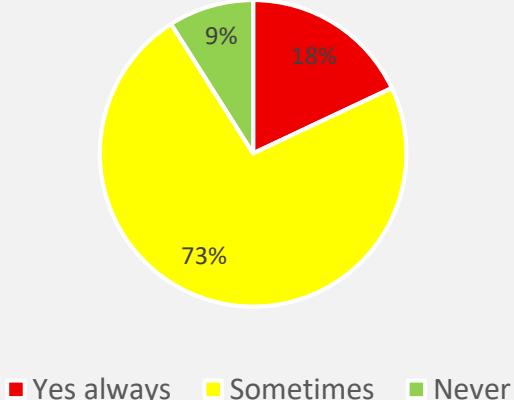
However, many people (42%) always feel a sense of belonging while 51% sometimes feel a sense of belonging. There are no significant differences by data slicing.

Is Belfast a shared city?

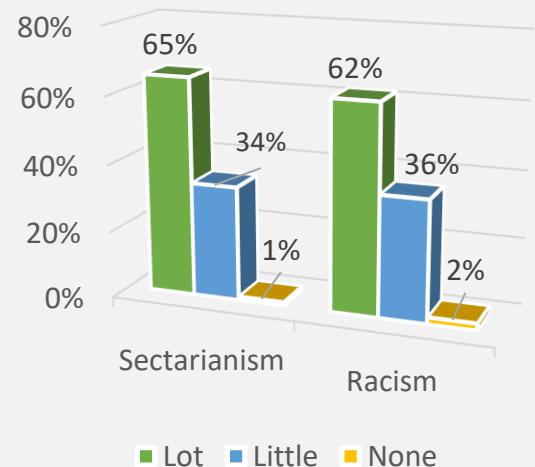


When asked whether their cultural identity or background is respected in the city most say sometimes (72%), with 20% always and 8% never. There is no significant differences by data slicing between people from different backgrounds.

Is your cultural identity/background respected?



Degree of Racism and Sectarianism



At a similar level 22% believe they are always able to express their own cultural identity or background while 66% believe they can sometimes and 13% never.

Generally the reference to 'sometimes' or 'little shared' may also reflect a city where some parts, such as the city centre, are well used by people from all communities but the city is still highly segregated therefore meaning many of these answers are caveated.

Delivery challenges

The survey asked people to identify some of the more important issues and barriers to promoting good community relations locally or/and in Belfast.

The most significant issues identified included racism, sectarianism, education, housing, and segregation.



Interface Segregation
communities issues people
Education
racism Tackling
cross community integration Sectarianism
young people services

Surveys: Qualitative Feedback

Survey participants were asked for qualitative feedback on the most important challenges for undertaking peacebuilding work, key issues in their areas. There was significant repetition in feedback such as those listed below, where the same or broadly similar comment was made at least five times.



good relations
shared Politics
political education pastpoliticians
housing interface
Lack segregation communities
language leadership
Lack understanding

The issues raised most often regarding barriers to undertaking peacebuilding work in the city included:

- o Sectarianism.
- o Housing.
- o Lack of understanding.
- o Political leadership.

The word cloud below summarises the most mentioned words for barriers to good relations in the city. It particularly highlights issues such as sectarianism, a lack of understanding, the past, politicians and politics, and leadership.

When asked for other comments the word cloud below highlights those most frequently mentioned. It includes issues such as community (more involvement), funding, need and delivering activities that people want.

Recent events including racial violence reflects a need to reinforce anti-racism work but also to acknowledge the causes of



either misunderstanding or fear of demographic change. Other areas of these islands have developed programmes to manage that change, sometimes tackling more substantial disorder than anything Belfast has experienced.

The last good relations Audit and Strategy suggested Council staff visit areas of good practice to learn about those successful initiatives. The circumstances haven't changed in 2025, and perhaps the need has increased.

Key issues include:

- o Feedback suggests a strong support for the good relations work of the Council from those who have had engagement with it.
- o Many people regard Belfast as somewhat or a little shared, or that at times their cultural expression is respected. This may also reflect a city that is still highly segregated and perhaps reflects a separate living pattern.
- o The degree of respect felt for cultural expression and identity is the same across all communities when data sliced.
- o Many people do feel a sense of belonging in the city though it needs built on.
- o Sectarianism and racism are still considered the most important priorities along with working in less well-off areas and working with young people.

- o However, there is a sense of an improvement in the degree of racism and sectarianism that exists in the city compared to three years ago, even though the number of incidents have increased.
- o Challenges are considered to include segregation, education, provision of services, and working at interfaces.
- o People considered there to be a lack of leadership around good relations and a lack of understanding of its importance or what to do about it.
- o Housing is often reported as a pressure on contributing to better community relations, often access to housing or perceived fairness.
- o There is some improvement over the last four years in how people in the city perceive the city and in their belief in the amount of racism and sectarianism.
- o Statistics on belonging and cultural expressions suggests that across the community there is some way to go.
- o While many people feel they belong in the city all the time and are free to express their background and cultural identity, a majority believe those things to be conditional, and only sometimes feel they belong, and their cultural expression and background is respected. This was relevant to people from all community backgrounds, but especially those from a Protestant faith background.
- o There is significant support for a move to multi-annual funding given the challenges of one-year only to manage and deliver impactful projects on sensitive issues that require community engagement and buy-in.
- o Tackling racism is identified as a key and important priority for the new strategy. There remains a strong belief in the need to tackle sectarianism as well. The United Nations defines racism as including racist ideologies, attitudes and structural arrangements with institutional practices. These are referenced in feedback though sometimes not in these terms.
- o How politics played out including in the media, was thought to inhibit transformative relationship-building.
- o Ensuring that young people were engaged in activities and saw a route for their inclusion in activities was considered important, as well as relationship-building, skills and attitude-changing initiatives.

This new Audit and subsequent Action Plans reflect these priorities.

A summary of inherent and residual findings from the survey include:



WORKSHOPS AND INTERVIEWS

Overall, approximately 400 people were engaged in workshops, consultation and interviews including through ten separate workshops with relevant groups and some workshops that were open to all from the community sector.

The consultation process was concluded with a completing the circle consultation where those who had engaged in the process were asked to return and hear the conclusions and key issues, and further input to what should be included in the good relations Strategy, Audit and associated Action Plans.

Feedback on the work of Council and the good relations team was generally positive. The team were regarded as engaged and committed, and the work of initiatives such as the Migrant Forum and the beacons project were acknowledged positively.

Funding by the Council was thought to be critical for sustaining good relations work and successes to date. However, no one at the workshops thought the funding was adequate and that it would be broadly beneficial for it to be for more than one year in a multi-annual format, perhaps for three years.

Disengaged young people and challenges of integration/inclusion/understanding minority ethnic groups including refugees and asylum seekers, were often referenced.

However, others also referred to the challenges of old fears being exacerbated by new challenges. They meant old fears of communities as they manage their relationship with other traditional communities, and at times sense of loss linked to legacy and related issues. Added to this were new fears generated by changing demographics in their area through migration. This included reference to media and social media.

The difficulty of managing change with an active story in the media and often negative, unfair or/and shrill social media content added to challenges in local communities.

Exploring integration is also a theme from interviews and workshops, including with minority ethnic communities and local communities about what integration means, protection of own faiths, and making sure, for example, youth provision, is open to all, safe, welcoming, and open to all faiths.

Key issues include:

- o Peacebuilding needs have changed in the last 30 years since both ceasefires in 1994 and the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.
- o Cross community work was successful, is still relevant and important, although some feedback was supportive of single identity work within the traditional community difference setting but also for encouraging new communities to work through issues before becoming involved in intercultural work. Some newcomer communities felt they were encouraged to integrate but that existing community groups can sometimes be unwelcoming.

- o Issues such as lack of inclusion linked to social and economic needs, were referenced often. As with building a positive peace, ensuring greater inclusion of those previously excluded, and helping people to understand and benefit from peace, were considered important elements of this iteration of reconciliation and peacebuilding.
- o Similarly tackling racism was considered a priority. Some of the feedback, at times explicit and at other times implicit, referenced the systemic nature of racism and the need for a deep-rooted exploration of it and the response to it across all sectors. This reflected a more general need for change identified, of moving from a largely mono-cultural society to an inter-cultural society. How a changing demography interacted with ongoing fears and sense of loss, linked to local issues and perceptions about The Troubles and peace since 1998, was referenced in different ways.
- o Many within the community believed that skills and capacity within community organisations delivering importance services and support to local communities was an ongoing need that needed continually updated and provided.
- o There are currently programmes which work with young people to address developing issues related to social media and its misuse. Should they prove to be successful they could potentially be more widely rolled out.
- o The needs for integration to be a two-way exchange with people from all communities and backgrounds involved safely and in a welcoming environment. People feeling vulnerable or believing their faith will be undermined, either for newcomer or established communities, does not facilitate integrated provision.
- o Programmes which seek to address misinformation and support engagement between people who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who are from the established communities in Belfast could potentially support greater understanding and respect across different cultures and faiths.
- o Perceived criminality in newcomer communities particularly among young males has led to protests and attacks. There is significant suspicion of migrants particularly those who are Muslim or non-European and it is important to recognise that racism and Islamophobia go hand in hand, and some people are the target of both.
- o Within the minority ethnic communities there is very real fear and questions as to whether Belfast is a safe place to live and work. Many people appear to be leaving to go to GB which is considered a safer choice. This has economic as well as social consequences, not least for our health service which is heavily reliant on migrant workers. With the major universities being situated in Belfast, racist incidents which have included unprovoked attacks on minority ethnic students have a very real potential to deter overseas students.

- o Concern about the impact on tourism should also be taken into consideration particularly in relation to the high visibility of passengers off cruise ships visiting the city centre.
- o Young minority ethnic people and children are reporting significant racist incidents within schools and feel that they are not being addressed. Associated mental health issues and anxiety around school attendance should racism and Islamophobia not be effectively dealt with, are already having very serious consequences around both educational achievement and wellbeing.
- o The inevitable resentment, anger and lack of trust in institutions such as the PSNI, schools and service providers have the potential to facilitate radicalisation.
- o There also a sense that inadequate cultural awareness or induction programmes for newcomers can result in neighbour disputes and misunderstanding on all sides.
- o Cultural/competency awareness for service providers and those working in communities across Belfast is needed. The view was expressed that often staff are anxious about making faux pas or being labelled as racist which can lead to avoiding people from minority ethnic backgrounds or not dealing with tensions. Such awareness would support those in decision making positions to have wider perspective and be better informed.

These issues and priorities are reflected in the new Strategy, this Audit and subsequent Action Plans.

Existing Delivery

There was a lot of success in delivery within the existing Good Relations Strategy evidenced in the feedback, interviews, workshops and survey. There is much good practice evidenced in Belfast City Council and significant opportunity to sustain the good programmes and introduce new in the context of a strategic, *Whole Community, Whole Council* approach that also involves other public agencies.

The Council's existing good relations plan includes support for 36 programmes broadly evenly split between the four TBUC strategic themes of Children and Young People (eight programmes), Shared Community (ten programmes), Safe Community (six programmes), and Cultural Expression (12 programmes).

The unit cost is highest for Safe Community at £400 per participant and lowest for Children and Young People at £118 per person.

Total good relations investment in programmes is £784k, most of which comes from Council (57%) and the balance from TEO.

The largest item of investment is in good relations small grants (£160k) with other programmes including St Patrick's Day, a positive cultural expression bonfire beacons programme, a civic engagement programme, minority ethnic equality and inclusion programme, an interface engagement programme, a shared education schools programme, and a strategic connections programme.

There are detailed and robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in the existing Strategy, and like the overall approach of the Council, the programmes are well regarded and considered effective. Many of the projects are consistent with the criteria linked to building a positive peace or/and an integrated social cohesion framework.

Potential Strategic Focus of New Strategy, Audit and Action Plans

The new strategy will be consistent with the T:BUC strategy from the Executive Office, either the one due to be published or the existing strategy. However, it may be time for the Council to update its strategic ambition for good relations and for the city as it enters the next iteration of the peace and reconciliation process.

While the existing delivery of the Council is very well regarded and effective, it may be time to re-set its strategic direction, review and enhance its role internally within Council, and ensure consistent and complementary delivery on social cohesion by the Council in all it provides. That may include re invigorating the role of The Shared City Partnership.

The strategic focus therefore seeks to identify a new iteration of reconciliation aims beyond good relations, recognising the critical role which good relations has in building a positive peace, but incorporating the critically important elements of what would be included in a new good relations and social cohesion strategy.

Concept of an Integrated Social Cohesion Approach and Strategy

Embedding the peace is an ongoing process that has been done relatively well to date with much capacity developed and sustained in communities and local government. There is importance in continuing to positively provide purpose, content and actions that serve the needs of all people in a post-conflict setting, where issues and contrary beliefs remain and where new challenges and dynamics emerge competing with an older set of views, principles and structures. Ensuring respectful attention to the needs and interests of all, including new and existing communities, in terms of relations, policies, actions and structures, is paramount. This is more important in a context of misinformation in the digital era and ongoing radicalisation of people of all ages whether for political, religious or ethnicity agendas. The role that social media plays in peddling harmful misinformation which raises tensions around sectarianism and racism is a new and significant challenge to the promotion and maintenance of good relations.

The next iteration of the reconciliation and peace building processes, therefore, needs to be more complex and complete than the building of relationships, which has been relatively successful to date and continues to be important. That next iteration needs to focus on the building of a more cohesive, inclusive and socially just community that embeds peace and enhances a sense of belonging for and by all.

It should focus not just on building good relations and relationships which are the foundation of any peace building process. It should go beyond good relations to create fairer and more open ways to access services and rights, have social justice running through its core like a golden thread, and develop trust in key institutions that are equitably regarded by all. It must also start to incorporate a meaningful strategy to focus on reconciliation.

This new Council **Good Relations and Social Cohesion strategy**, therefore, focuses on inclusion, belonging and trust, on identifying the rights and responsibilities equally applicable to all, and a long-term whole-Council approach to building a more cohesive city, with the goal of meaningful reconciliation at its core.

Every aspect of Council policy and design should include reference to and focus on its impact on developing greater cohesion and better relations.

The Strategy includes six pillars for building a more cohesive city and these are reflected in this new Good Relations Audit:

1. Continue to **repair and refine relations within a reconciliation lens and re-embolden** how those relations can improve the lives of people across the community. This may include, for example, a more focused multi-annual grants programme or further work on the beneath the radar but well regarded and successful bonfire beacon programme. The dynamics of different types of fear within local communities and newcomer communities may also be relevant and assist in supporting positive cultural expression in communities that feel a sense of cultural loss.

If a fear or sense of loss on key issues across communities is part of the dynamic, especially within communities close to interfaces and in areas of greatest socio-economic need, are cultural issues a focus for measuring status and standing? How does Council continue to support progress toward recognising peaceful and lawful cultural celebrations while being recognised as a supporter of cultural expression in all communities?
2. **Develop capacity** to sustain and strengthen decision-making and project delivery across the community. This includes capacity to undertake social cohesion and good relations work across all sectors in the community and all departments in Council. Capacity is not just focused on training and knowledge ensuring that decision-making processes within Council are robust, fair, aware of implications; and the good relations/social cohesion function is appropriately positioned within Council. Some communities are more advanced than others in their capacity and community infrastructure. Some may need additional resources to get to a position of parity in their ability to engage with others in the good relation process. It may also include successful initiatives such as the migrant forum.

The Migrant Forum has demonstrated a capacity to identify key issues and bring significant community-based organisations to greater collaboration. Sustaining the Migrant Forum with an even greater focus on anticipating and challenging narratives is important.
3. Ensure **greater openness and transparency** in decision-making and delivery. This includes decisions made within Council and encouraging more openness outside Council with community, public sector and other stakeholders. Funding decisions should also bear in mind the importance of being seen to be fair and equitable as an outcome, and monitoring + evaluation processes that are simpler and more relevant to the projects funded. The good relations implications of decisions needs to be explored through the Council committee process and in the report-writing of Council officers.

Would a framework or charter for Good Relations be useful as a commitment by elected members in how they engage with each other, and with all communities, but even more so perhaps for community-based projects to adhere to if they wish to benefit from support and funding from Council?

4. Develop **trust in key institutions** by all people across the community. Key institutions relevant to social cohesion include, for example, local government services, policing and youth services amongst others. Making good relations therefore more relevant to the work of Council in, for example, policing and community safety is relevant as is being aware of any trust issues any community may have in Council's decision-making processes.

Statistics show that trust in policing, and recruitment to PSNI, is more problematic in Belfast. Does the Council and PSNI with other agencies such as through the PCSP, engage in specific trust-building initiatives?

5. Deliver better and meaningful **social justice outcomes**, with a focus on those interface areas that still suffer most from our divided society. This may also touch on issues of relevance such as gender equity, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), and with minority ethnic and more disadvantaged communities. Access to green space and ongoing impact of legacy and other issues relevant to those communities most impacted by the conflict are also the type of issues that have social justice implications. Common needs across communities can provide a greater focus for good relations and cohesion activities.

Ongoing segregation fails residents especially if they live at interface areas close to peace barriers. The conflict and its legacy more deeply and negatively affects them, and they are more likely to live in areas of greatest deprivation. If these communities cannot be left behind and they have nowhere to go, should the good relations and social cohesion strategy pay particular attention to the interconnectedness of disadvantage, interfaces and common concerns?

6. Develop an **overarching dynamic or sense of belonging for the city** to which all people can buy in. This includes all communities including newcomer communities as well as people from traditional community divides; and progressing work at interfaces with potentially different perceptions of priorities.

The Shared City Partnership deliver a critical leadership role in agreeing what a sense of belonging is and what needs to change and be supported to achieve it? The Partnership will provide the right focus for inter-agency collaboration, and act independently of Council when required.

These pillars do not fail to recognise that Belfast City Council and other agencies, have helped to change the city remarkably and for the better in the last 25 years. The change, regeneration, and improvements have been positive and largely of benefit to all communities. However, more than 30 years since ceasefires, and 27 years since the Agreement, the city needs to finish the job of a reconciliation process that is for the benefit of all, leaves no one behind in real or perceived terms, and builds a

genuinely cohesive city by the middle of the 21st century. In this period, our poorest communities are those who often live at interfaces and closest to peace barriers and are still our poorest communities after many decades of investment. Leaving no one behind should mean Council working hardest at areas separated by peace barriers.

Therefore, the approach for the city by Council should have good relations and social justice at its core, all of which should be critical aims for any agency developing and delivering services for people from all backgrounds. These social justice priorities are as applicable to keeping people safe including women and girls as they are to providing accessible services for those who need them most.

The benefits of such an approach will be to:

- o Have stronger communities where there is mutual support across political, ethnic or religious divides.
- o Have the goal of meaningful reconciliation as an intentional outcome of this work
- o Increase the resilience of the city.
- o Deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes, particularly in interface areas where they are most acute.
- o Provide a further basis for economic health and growth.
- o Reduce conflict, enhance healing, increase support for legitimate agencies, and enhance support between sectors including the community and faith sectors.

This approach speaks to the benefit of intercultural rather than multicultural approaches to developing cohesion where integration and relationship building is the aim rather than separate provision, where misinformation is challenged, and where long-term as well as short-term approaches are embraced. The approach seeks to simplify the measurements of success where complex and often inappropriate indicators are replaced with ones that are shorter, easier to understand; and more accurate measurements are used especially for short-term projects. It also suggests a strategy that realises that the impact of projects able to plan for a just a one-year project is restricted compared to what multi-annual funding can deliver.

It advocates for digital innovation. It seeks the active promotion of both promoting integration while tackling social exclusion, relevant to established as well as new communities, in countering extremism and radicalisation. Radicalisation, especially of young people, includes people from existing and newcomer communities whether people being used by organisations to act unlawfully or people frustrated at real or perceived threats to communities and people, or racism directed at them.

Regardless of a community's politics, cultural identity, ethnicity or faith, there are common issues and needs that are reinforced in an integrated social cohesion

strategy; there are common responses relevant to these issues and needs; there are common approaches that work whether longer- or shorter-term; there is a need to ensure that social cohesion and good relations tackles social exclusion, poverty, fear and feelings of being left behind, as stimulants to this radicalisation.

That is why Belfast City Council, any Council, requires a whole-Council approach that takes seriously the ambition of a 10-25 year good relations and social cohesion strategy and three-year good relations plan that take the first steps in that 10-25 year process. All functions of a Council affect cohesion, trust, and equitable provision; and processes for decision-making affect it just as much which includes how people engage with others within Council and within and between projects that receive Council funding.

Building on the impressive change it has helped facilitate to date Belfast City Council should lead the recognition of a *genuine* reconciliation process where people understand and believe that progress for all is predicated on an honest desire to understand and meet the concerns and needs of others.

Risk management

The risk assessment highlights potential challenges and robust mitigation strategies that ensure the strategy will achieve desired outcomes. The significance of proactive risk management and assessment during project consideration and deliberations will contribute to successful project completion.

Overall, a projects' ability to deliver successfully relies on effective community engagement and communication strategies which is why community involvement is an important part of this Audit.

The core aspects of the Audit and Strategy for Good Relations and Cohesion will assist in the measurement and impact of programmes, involve others in Council and other agencies, and strengthen the management and oversight of the strategy.

The role of the Shared City Partnership will focus on a greater challenge to all on it – Elected members, other public agencies, community and faith sector representatives, to play a role in setting the indicators and therefore the outcomes but also delivering on them.

The cohesion indicators agreed will cross other aspects of Council delivery as well as involve other public agencies.

The *Whole Community, Whole Council* approach challenges all with an interest and who will have an impact to get involved and help deliver outcomes. This includes other parts of Council and a broader engagement with the voluntary and community sector.

Those indicators, once agreed by the Partnership will be how the Partnership and other sectors, not just the Council, measures achievement in making Belfast more cohesive. All programmes and projects should relate to them.

With a focus on transformative not performative actions, Council should robustly challenge all activities in good relations delivery about efficacy and effectiveness. That means activities that are deemed to be expected and 'usual' but that have no impact, may be disregarded from delivery.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The TEO has a range of indicators and performance measurements which the Council's Good Relations Action Plans will be consistent with.

The appendices includes suggestions for the indicators and questions in the transformative not performative space that projects supported by Council may be asked. They will relate to the four themes of T:BUC, the five pillars of the Audit and Strategy, and the outcome-based indicators agreed by the Shared City Partnership.

These indicators will:

- o Shape programmes and projects that are supported especially when receiving Council grants.
- o Be the basis for ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities.
- o Allow for early recognition of under-performing aspects of the cohesion strategy. A radial chart in the appendices indicates how that might work as a reporting mechanism to the Shared City Partnership.

COMMUNICATION PLAN

Communications should reflect the aims, outcomes and values of the TBUC strategy in the messaging, timeline, and deliverables. All branding and messaging will be consistent with TEO requirements. TEO will be always involved and engaged appropriately.

A key aim will also be to engage and involve any and all funded projects in communication activities, however.

Objectives

The communication objectives are :

1. Increase awareness among local communities and stakeholders about the new Strategy, Audit, Action Plans and its projects.
2. Encourage active participation in projects.
3. Change attitudes by showcasing successes and long-term benefits, for the city and future generations.
4. Promote awareness of TEO funding as a catalyst for change, emphasising how it improves community relations, intercultural engagement and social justice outcomes.

These communication objectives apply for every project and Theme.

Purpose

The purpose of the communications is to:

- o Increase awareness of the funded projects, and impact in the city.
- o Increase knowledge of, and participation in, activities and events.
- o Complement outreach activities by the Council and TEO.
- o Acquire feedback useful to the TBUC process and plans going forward.

Activities

Communication activities will include:

- o Every project will be required to undertake communication/PR activities.
- o Each project will also be asked at the start to identify further potential positive PR opportunities.

Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholders are:

- o Projects funded through direct engagement.
- o The communities and community and faith organisations that are interested and able to contribute.
- o Elected representatives.
- o Other public agencies.
- o The Shared City Partnership.

All material produced, news releases and other public information will incorporate appropriate branding and will be approved by Council.

Exit Strategy

The focus for the Audit, Strategy and Action Plans will be to deliver successful good relations and cohesion projects within a re-focused strategic direction, including a ten-year plus cohesion lens and exploring an overall ambition for Belfast in 2050.

The key elements of this long-term change include:

- o A refocused and reinvigorated leadership and challenge role for the Shared City Partnership with specific measurement for cohesion, and a transformative versus performative approach.
- o Mainstreaming or systemic change in a *Whole Community, Whole Council* approach. For example, the Council and Shared City Partnership facilitation of a cultural competence project will change how public agencies engage with all communities and should lead to better decision-making.
- o Changing behaviours, attitudes and skills that will stay within the city so long as people stay, for example in supporting city-wide belonging and greater integration and crossing of boundaries.
- o The building of trust in public agencies especially on areas and issues of sensitivity such as trust in Council, youth services and policing.

The Audit, and Strategy acknowledges that despite 28 years of peacebuilding work since the Good Friday Agreement, challenges remain and sometimes these challenges have not been adequately addressed.

The significant change in demographics and consequent issues of racism and lack of welcome for new communities are addressed as an emerging feature especially when encountering fears by existing communities regarding a sense of, or dread of, loss.

Redevelopment and acknowledgment that some people in less well-off communities feel they are being left behind, means that the strategy seeks to provide a sense of inclusion, hope and aspiration for these communities to be involved in delivery whether at interfaces or in communities that have major challenges on those same social issues.

Changing attitudes and the inclusion of the traditionally excluded, therefore, are features of the outworking of the Strategy, reflected in the Audit and subsequent Action Plans. This will lead to sustainable and long-term change.

Belfast City Council and its partners in the *Whole Community, Whole Council* approach, will measure and update delivery of the Council's Good Relations work. Measurement of success will therefore be more real allowing the Shared City Partnership and Council to re-evaluate their how and what they are delivering. This reinterpretation may not just be about aspects of promoting good relations and cohesion but more substantially what cohesion means for the city in decades to come.

Conclusion

This new Good Relations Audit flows directly from the new Good Relations and Cohesion Strategy for Belfast, which have been developed in tandem. These are exciting additions to the previous audits, strategies and programmes, complementing existing delivery and adding value to existing good practice in the city.

By focusing on outcomes such as the five pillars in the strategy, the indicators and monitoring processes will flow naturally.

The Audit and Strategy identifies that sustainable change is important. Seeking change in skills and behaviour will have impact for many years. Furthermore, improving relationships or changing the way decisions are taken now to support an intercultural future for the city will leave a legacy for years to come.

The Audit identifies and directly embraces the issues that still exist. It will involve people, led by communities, in acknowledging those issues from the past that are still to be addressed, in the context of new challenges in the present, for the benefit of the city in the future.

The issues within this Audit, along with the direction of the new Strategy goes beyond good relations to embrace long-term cohesion with sustainable, systemic outcomes that will help transform the city, and how Council delivers good relations and cohesion for the future.

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Interviews and Workshops

Workshops and Events

Alliance grouping
 Belfast City Council group leaders meeting
 Belfast City Council senior management team
 Completing the Circle event
 Diverse Youth NI workshop
 Donegal Pass Community Association
 DUP grouping
 Good Relations Staff BCC, first session
 Good Relations Staff BCC, second session
 Green grouping
 Migrant Forum workshop
 Muslim learning workshop
 NI Assist workshop
 Open session for elected members
 Public workshop in-person x 2
 Public workshop on line
 Red Cross workshop with refugees and migrant workers
 SDLP grouping
 Shared City Partnership workshop x 2
 Sinn Fein grouping
 Survey of community and staff
 Ulster Unionist grouping

Arthurs	Bridget	Forward South Partnership
Bryan	Dominic	QUB
Conlon	Denise	NIHE
Deitrich	Lisa	Community relations in Schools
Douglas	Sammy	DUP
Duffy	Joe	Sinn Fein
Egiomo	Augustine	iAssistNI
Egwaogie	Israel	Diverse Youth NI
Euler	Laura	BHSCT
Fitzpatrick	Julia	Migrant Centre
Gardner	Chris	The Executive Office
Gunn	Liam	NIHE
Irwin	Jacqueline	Community Relations Council
King	Gavin	The Executive Office
McAvoy	Michael	DoJ
McCloy	Lisa	Donegall Pass Community Association
Plant	Jamie	Youthlink
Smyth	Brian	Green Party
Tanden	Nisha	Arts Ekta

Thompson	Andrew	QUB
Tubbritt	Gerry	BCDA

Appendix B

Examples of Key M+E Questions for Initial Discussion with Projects

Evaluation Samples

Components of the strategy monitoring and evaluation process for the Shared City Partnership and projects, will include responses to the following key questions with projects upon appointment. These will be robustly incorporated within a perspective of transformative versus performative – in other words the change that will be made needs to be clear and of benefit to cohesion.

Targets	
Baseline	Need established – where are we now?
Outcomes	Ambition realistic but achievable – what change do we wish to effect?
Impact	What happens within the community/target group - consequences of that change?
Processes	
Measurement	What are appropriate indicators and outcomes?
Data	What information is needed to measure change?
Use of Data	When is data needed and how it will best be used afterwards?
Resources	
People	Who is best placed to carry out monitoring and evaluation?
Skills	Do people understand their role, understand why M&E is important, and have the necessary knowledge and skills to undertake it?
Money	Is there sufficient time and money to carry out the monitoring and evaluate the impact/learning?
Stakeholders	
Partners	Have partners in the process been identified and are they willing to participate?
Funders	Are funders needs being met including any partners that have inputted money or staff?
Community	How will the community – as ultimate recipients and deliverers of better relationships – be involved as informed participants?
Reviews	
Mid-term	To provide scrutiny and provide comfort that delivery is likely to deliver by

	programme end, and demonstrate support to the programme
Project End	To demonstrate success against outcomes identified with project managers at the start
Going Forward	Learning what will change, refine and improve strategic priorities going forward

Appendix C

Outworkings of Survey

Some of the significant conclusions from the survey and their outworking to the new strategy are summarised below.

Survey findings

- 93% believe good relations in the district is highly or very important - just 2% say it is not at all important
- Critical issues are considered to be dealing with sectarianism and racism, involving young people, and trust in institutions.
- Barriers raised including sectarianism, housing, leadership.
- Support for funding, both small grants for less experienced groups and longer grants to facilitate more planning.
- The recognition of existing socio-economic issues.
- Cultural expression is important to people and for all sides of the community people feel able to express themselves but it also could be better.
- On-line posting can be problematic and fan negative beliefs even if inaccurate.
- Good relations is considered a very important agenda for Council.
- There is still a considerable amount of racism and sectarianism in the city.

Inherent impact - outgoing Audit and Strategy

- Well regarded and impactful good relations work by the Council
- Community organisations very aware of the GR small grants support.
- The smaller, short-term grants supports many newly established groups.
- The migrant forum is well regarded.
- The cultural expressions programmes are well regarded.
- The existing programmes deliver less combating online hate.
- While every important function of Council good relations is less than a core function.
- Sectarianism is central to Council's good relations strategy as is racism.
- Housing and some of the related socio-economic issues raised are not core to the existing strategy but have been raised as playing into community feelings of threat from newcomer communities.
- Mental and physical health and wellbeing are factors for communities living at interfaces.

Residual impact - incoming Audit and Strategy

- The GR staff at Council are supported and will continue community engagement.
- Existing programmes are regarded well and many should be continued.
- Cultural expression programmes will continue with additional inclusion challenges.
- The migrants forum will continue with additional integration challenges.
- A multi-annual grants award, even on a pilot basis or for some programmes, may help increase outcomes achieved.
- There are common needs especially around socio-economic and social justice issues, that may provide a backdrop for linking them with good relations and contact outcomes.
- The online threat may require focus on cultural awareness and attitudes of young people.
- Sectarianism and racism should still be a core part of the new good relations strategy.

Appendix D
Example of Indicators and measurement Management Tool

The framework for a sense of cohesion and belonging in Belfast is:

- 0** Capable of replication annually or more realistically in a three or five-year basis.
- 0** Adaptable including to other aspects of good practice.
- 0** Provides headline assessments behind which are more extensive data and statistics most of which are already available to public agencies and government, local or central.
- 0** The potential for cross-agency collaboration given the interplay of the key statistics.
- 0** Oversight that is capable from a cross-sectoral organisation such as The Shared City Partnership.

The key cohesion and belonging themes may include:

1. Education and work.
2. Health and housing.
3. Trust and safety.
4. Relations and culture.
5. Community and social links.

The indicators for each theme could be numerous and over-powering. The plethora of data may underlie each theme with three basic indicators for each theme. The could be, for example:

Themes and Indicators

These are not real and have been limited to three indicators per theme. There could be any number of indicators. The larger number of indicators might increase confusion but may also increase accuracy.

Theme	Indicator
Education and work	% of children in pre-education provision % achieving 5+ GCSEs % satisfied with current employment
Health and housing	% engaging in leisure activities % registered with a dentist % in secure owner-occupied resident or with stable tenancy
Trust and safety	% who trust key institutions % feeling fearful or insecure % victims of hate related incidents or crime
Relationships and culture	% of people with friends from different backgrounds % who are comfortable with diversity % who feel their culture is respected
Community and social links	% registered to vote % who report a sense of belonging % participating in community activities.

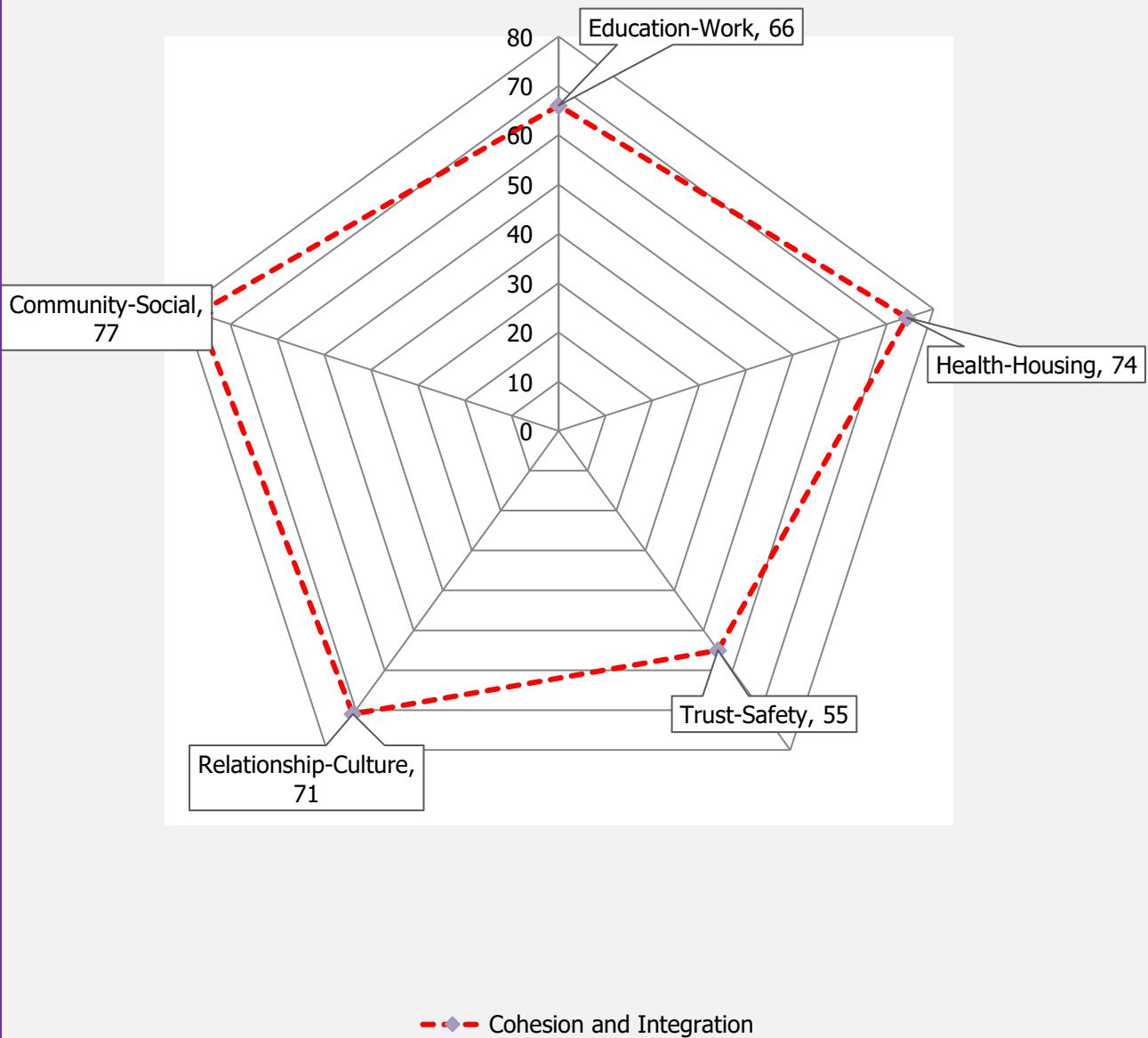
Radial Chart

A radial chart could be a clear visual summary of how well the city is doing.

The scores allocated to the cohesion and belonging framework therefore allows for the creation of a radial chart with an at-a-glance assessment of cohesion and belonging for the city.

Radial chart scores out of 100 but is only a visible example of how the model could operate – these statistics are not real.

Cohesion and Integration Measurement



The radial scoring, at a glance, indicates that:

- o Cohesion and belonging requires more investment in relationships and culture, and in community and social links.
- o The city is doing well on education and employment.

Appendix E
Summary of Strategic Priorities

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The strategic priorities over the next three years of this new Audit (2026-2029), are:

Our Children and Young People	Our Safe Community	Our Shared Community	Our Cultural Expression
All consistent with existing relevant regional and city policy agendas			
Actions Contact programme developing initiatives between pupils, staff and governors of schools that prioritise understanding of the development of the city. Young leaders programme for existing youth leaders in communities targeting uniformed and non-uniformed youth organisations focusing on potential next generation of leaders and their response to changing demographics and new media. Small grants programme that will offer pilot three-year funding across all TBUC priorities with a	Actions Minority ethnic equality, inclusion and integration programme including support for the continuation of the Ethnic Minority Forum. Interface Common Issues and Leadership programme developing joint initiatives. Small grants programme that will offer pilot three-year funding across all TBUC priorities with a priority on social justice commonalities.	Actions Refocus and reinvigoration of the role of the Shared City Partnership Delivery of a cultural awareness/competency training programme for decision-makers in key agencies including Council, SCP members and key community organisations. Trust-building initiative between communities and key public agencies.	Actions Supporting critical cultural expression activities including seeking alternatives to bonfires while encouraging lawful and respectful bonfires celebrations. Supporting critical cultural expression activities including around St. Patrick's Day celebrations attracting people from all communities including established and newcomer communities. Small grants programme that will offer pilot three-year funding across all TBUC

priority on social justice commonalities.		<p>and delivery relevant to Council staff and members.</p> <p>Production of a 25-year strategy for cohesion in Belfast.</p> <p>Small grants programme that will offer pilot three-year funding across all TBUC priorities with a priority on social justice commonalities.</p>	priorities with a priority on social justice commonalities.
Results	Results	Results	Results
<p>Results are outlined in greater detail in the action plan. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engagement of traditionally excluded, disadvantaged, minority & people from different faiths including newcomer communities. ○ Enhanced sense of belonging. ○ More young people involved in good relations activities developing skills, changing behaviours or attitudes. ○ Greater collaboration between schools from different sectors. 	<p>Results are outlined in greater detail in the action plan. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Changed behaviour ○ Reduced anti-social behaviour ○ Reduced isolation ○ Enhanced health and wellbeing ○ More traditionally excluded people engaged ○ Increased trust in institutions ○ Recognised good practice and good news stories ○ Acknowledgement of positive diversity 	<p>Results are outlined in greater detail in the action plan. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased sense of belonging and a positive acknowledgment of difference. ○ Greater understanding of the benefits of interculturalism. ○ Greater inclusion of people from minority faith or cultural backgrounds. ○ Enhanced skills and knowledge. 	<p>Results are outlined in greater detail in the action plan. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More quality, lawful cultural expression ○ Acknowledgement of, and respect for, different, lawful cultural expression ○ Increased sense of belonging and a positive acknowledgment of difference. ○ Greater understanding of the benefits of interculturalism.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Increased trust in institutions.○ Changed behaviours and attitudes to others.○ Increased environmental awareness and actions.○ More interface and cross community active cooperation.○ Greater Council engagement in good relations across all departments.○ Better collaboration across public agencies promoting a more cohesive city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Better cross community and intercultural understanding, cooperation and trust.○ Greater inclusion of people from minority faith or cultural backgrounds.○ Enhanced skills and knowledge.○ Changed behaviours and attitudes to others.
Communication Objectives			
Communication objectives include:			
Increase awareness.			
Greater knowledge of the diverse range of skills and knowledge gained through programme participation, promoting participation and the wider impact that builds community cohesion.			
Highlighting change perceptions and long-term benefits caused by the actions in the strategy.			
Promote awareness of strategy outcomes and changed focus through the strategy.			
Recognition of the positive funding as a key catalyst for better relations, promoting cohesion and belonging.			

Continuous promotion and awareness among local communities and stakeholders regarding the strategy and action plan activities, ensuring all stakeholders are aware of the long-term outcomes and impacts.

Outputs from initiatives that promote better relations.

Increased knowledge and understanding of, and support for, regional and city policies and strategies.

Innovation

The co-designed plan includes new and innovative approaches in the city including amongst other things:

- o Projects that will ensure decision-makers and public agencies align to a commitment to interculturalism.
- o Social justice projects that response to needs within a city where the common social justice needs cross interfaces and communities.
- o Investment that aligns with the overall strategic priorities of all public agencies and the TEO and the Belfast Agenda.
- o Delivery of programmes that develop skills and fosters collaborations across interfaces.
- o Delivery of programmes that draw on themes of cultural diversity, civic identity, health and wellbeing and many others.
- o Deliver innovative programmes that support training learning and skills development through, leadership programme and tackling issues associated with new media.
- o Programmes that collaborate with public agencies and community forms to ensure genuine cultural competence in decision-making given the changing demographic dynamics in the city.
- o Social cohesion: Provide relevant platform for participants to share stories, gain insight, and perspectives relating to conflict, recognition of minority communities, and addressing ongoing inclusion issues.

The AP will help to address long standing social and economic challenges which have, and continue to, impact communities, particularly those in Belfast's interface communities.

Section 1

1.1 Programme information

Number of programmes	8
Name/role/contact details of all staff responsible for programme management	<p>To be appointed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Senior Good Relations Officer* <p>Godfrey McCartney, Good Relations Manager mccartneygodfrey@belfastcity.gov.uk</p> <p>Leish Dolan, Good Relations Officer dolanl@belfastcity.gov.uk <u>Mobile#:</u> 07825 147712</p> <p>Natasha Lynch: Good Relations Officer @belfastcity.gov.uk <u>Mobile#:</u> to be added</p> <p>David Robinson, Good Relations Officer robinsondavid@belfastcity.gov.uk <u>Mobile#:</u> 07920 187264 A N Other GRO</p> <p>Emma Kennedy, Project Development Officer kennedyemmma@belfastcity.gov.uk <u>Mobile#:</u> 07921800621</p> <p>Mark McCloskey, Partnership Support Officer mccloskeym@belfastcity.gov.uk <u>Telephone#:</u> 02890 320202 x6031</p> <p>Louise Reilly, Monitoring Officer reillyl@belfastcity.gov.uk <u>Telephone#:</u> 02890 320202 x3430</p>

*Leish Dolan and David Robinson are covering the tasks of the Senior Good Relations Officer.

1.2 Financial information

Name/contact details for staff responsible for financial management of programme	Mark McCloskey, Partnership Support Officer goodrelations@belfastcity.gov.uk 028 90270663
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	100%	75%
Total cost	£600,000	£450,000
Total programme costs	£448,862.20	£336,646.64
Programme costs breakdown		
Children and Young People	£72,215.55	£54,161.66
Shared Community	£72,215.55	£54,161.66
Safe Community	£192,215.55	£144,161.66
Cultural Expression	£112,215.55	£84,161.66
Total staff and other expenses costs	£151,137.80*	£113,353.36
Other expenses breakdown e.g. travel, stationery, phones etc please give details	None	None

***Note that BCC has prioritised Programme costs in this Action Plan. Therefore the programme/salary breakdown is 69%/31%, with the Council seeking 44% rather than a 75% match funding for salaries.**

1.3 Claim deadlines

It is extremely important that all claims for expenditure are made promptly and that full expenditure is claimed for within six weeks of the end of the financial year. The claim deadlines for 26/27 are as follows:

- Quarter 1 to be with TEO no later than end of July 2026
- Quarter 2 to be with TEO no later than end of October 2026
- Quarter 3 to be with TEO no later than the end of January 2027
- Quarter 4 to be with TEO no later than 11th June 2027

Section 2

2.01 PROGRAMME NAME	2.02 CODE
Good Relations Small Grants Programme	BCC1
2.03 KEY WORDS	DIVERSE, URBAN, SHARED, YOUTH, ADULT
2.04 Programme Summary	<p>The new tri-annual audit has demonstrated how valued the small grants programme is amongst those community organisations that Council works with. The audit highlighted that an annual small grant was appreciated by less well-developed community organisations, while many felt it was restrictive to what they could achieve due to the one-year length and the size of the grant.</p> <p>We are therefore seeking to develop a new pilot multi-annual awards this year that will work alongside the established one-year small grants from 2027 onwards. The overall small grants process is managed by the Council's Central Grants Unit who manage the online application process. The Good Relations Grants are trawled alongside other small grants, via this link: https://grants.belfastcity.gov.uk</p> <p>The assessment process will be reviewed taking account of our focus on transformative not performative actions and activities, and to ensure consistency with the five pillars of the new strategy as well as the four T:BUC themes. It will be reviewed and publicised no later than April 2026 with successful projects being notified in May 2026. This process and timeline is dependent upon a successful allocation of funding from TEO for the DCGRP.</p> <p>In 2025/26, 48 groups were awarded funding, totalling £170,945.41, ranging from amounts between £2,000 and £5,000, with the full allocation from BCC1 being awarded. As there is always a much greater demand (£251,919 in 2025/26) than funding available, and because of the new awards, a slight increased amount of funding and a similar process is planned for 2026/27. There will be two specific elements of the programme this year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ① Small grants awarded for a year to stimulate activities consistent with the five pillars especially focusing on small, newer groups. ② The development of a process to support the allocation of larger grants for a three-year period with a focus on social justice issues Working on Common Issues Across Interface/Disadvantaged Communities, new approaches to cultural

	expression, and planning or developing new approaches more generally.			
2.05 Contact details for programme staff	Leish Dolan: dolanl@belfastcity.gov.uk Natasha Lynch: David Robinson; robinsondavid@belfastcity.gov.uk			
2.06 Total budgeted cost of programme (100%)	£180,000.00			
2.07 Total TEO Contribution	£135,000			
2.08 Total target no. of participants	Direct	2,500	Indirect	N/A
2.09 Budgeted unit cost of programme	£72			
2.10 Targeted participant background analysis	40% CRN, 40% PUL, 20% BME			
2.11 Name and post code of Programme HQ	Location	BCC. 4-10 Linenhall Street	Postcode	BT2 8BP
2.12 Names and post codes for main areas of programme impact	Location	Newtownards Road	Postcode	BT4 1AF
	Location	Ormeau Road	Postcode	BT7 2EW
	Location	Falls Road /Shankill Road	Postcode	BT12 6FD /BT13 3AA
	Location	Antrim Road	Postcode	BT14 6BP
2.13 T:BUC Key Aim	All 4 T:BUC Priorities			
2.14 Link to good relations audit	<p>In 2025/26, the full complement of allotted funding for our small grants programme of £170,945 was allocated in April '25, giving groups a full year to deliver their projects.</p> <p>In our current audit, there is a strong recognition of the Council's small grant programme for Good Relations projects and as such, the Audit recommends that the Council maintain a Good Relations small grants programme, to ensure good relations outcomes across all four T:BUC Themes. However, the audit also recommends the development and delivery of a larger multi-annual award to allow projects to plan and deliver better.</p> <p>Audit references are found in pages 13-15, 18-19, 20-27, 30-31, 33-34, 36-39, 42-43 of the Good Relations Audit.</p>			
2.15 Complementarity- include links with other Strategy's e.g. Peace Plus, Urban Villages, MEDF etc	The Good Relations small grant scheme is part of a pool of ten different grants that are administered by a multidisciplinary team of officers in a central grants team. The Good Relations Officers assess all Good Relations			

	<p>grants, but the benefit of this internal system is that the administration is undertaken centrally, which is a key factor in ensuring that there is no duplication of TEO funding with other small grant funding. Officers from relevant Units sit on the moderation panels for grants assessment for these other small grant programmes and this promotes information sharing and ensures complementarity between projects. The programme supports groups from Section 75 (2) groups and as such complements MEDF, CGRF and CRC small grants funding streams.</p> <p>In addition, the Council's PEACEPLUS and Good Relations teams sit within the Good Relations Unit. Good Relations Staff have been involved in the provision of advice, support and guidance in the development of the Council's PEACEPLUS Plan, ensuring complementarity and cohesion within both Plans. The Good Relations and PEACEPLUS functions are both governed by the Shared City Partnership (a working group of Council).</p> <p>There are also strong links with the Council's Community Development team and the D/PCSPs ensuring that Good Relations staff are aware of the programmes currently being supported there. This ensures there is no duplication but more importantly, opportunities for collaboration on projects which realise mutually beneficial outcomes around issues such as interfaces and hate crime.</p> <p>The Shared City Partnership will also be engaged in reviewing the funding programmes. It has members that represent other public agencies and funding organisations. This will help ensure further complementarity.</p>
<p>2.16 Impacted communities – urban, rural or both</p>	<p>Both. Impact will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 Delivery against the agreed cohesion indicators. 0 Delivery on common issues across communities. 0 Identification of good practice elsewhere. 0 Better coordination between communities and agencies. 0 Increased trust and sense of purpose with key public agencies and between communities. 0 Better cultural competence in decision-making and delivery. 0 Delivery on good relations charter.

2.01 PROGRAMME NAME		2.02 CODE			
St. Patrick's Day Civic Events Programme		BCC2			
2.03 KEY WORDS	DIVERSE, SHARED, URBAN, YOUTH, ADULT, SENIOR				
2.04 Programme Summary	<p>Belfast City Council represents the largest city in Northern Ireland and understands the importance of cultural expression on all sides of the community including making cultural expression as inclusive as possible as a process of mutual respect and mutual participation. In 2026, the Council as a whole will allocate roughly £300,000 towards events around St. Patrick's Day.</p> <p>This programme will support a Carnival Parades and other associated events, before, during and after the parade, that are diverse, inclusive and reflective of the make-up of our City. This is to ensure that the Carnival Parade will be as inclusive as possible, representing the diversity of the make-up of the city. This will involve specific outreach, engagement, workshops and work with youth groups and groups from our migrant and minority ethnic communities and from the broad Unionist Community as well as the broad Nationalist Community. The parade itself, therefore will reflect the changing demographics of the city, as will our mainstream and social media promotion of the programme.</p>				
2.05 Contact details for programme staff	David Robinson: robinsondavid@belfastcity.gov.uk				
2.06 Total budgeted cost of programme (100%)	£20,000				
2.07 Total TEO contribution	£15,000				
2.08 Total target no. of participants	Direct	500	Indirect	10,000	
2.09 Budgeted unit cost of programme	£40				
2.10 Targeted participant background analysis	65% CNR, 25% PUL, 10% BME				
2.11 Name and post code of Programme HQ	Location	Belfast City Council	Postcode	BT2 8BP	
2.12 Names and post codes for main areas of programme impact	Location	City Centre BT1 5GS	Postcode	BT1 5GS	
2.13 T:BUC Key Aim	Cultural Expression				
2.14 Link to good relations audit	The Audit continues to recognise that promoting positive cultural expression is an important touchstone for people and that work is still required. It also notes that there is significant overall Council budget allocated to St				

	<p>Patrick's Day and that this could focus on supporting cultural inclusion and participation. As such, the key element of the Audit for this programme reflects that delivery of cultural expression programmes will continue to be reimagined within the needs identified in the audit. As the Audit references, "while many people feel their cultural identity is respected, a continuing segregated city reflects feelings that inclusion, respect for cultures and belonging are still not as deep or widespread as we would like". As such, the approach to this programme will be to enhance the Council led events by creating greater diversity from all cultural identities in the main flagship St. Patrick's Day Carnival Parade, ensuring that it is able to be demonstrate a key role in promoting Good Relations. Audit references are found in pages 6, 8, 13-14, 18-19, 30, 32, 33-35, 37-39, 42-43 of the Good Relations Audit.</p>
<p>2.15 Complementarity- include links with other Strategy's e.g. Peace Plus, Urban Villages, MEDF etc</p>	<p>This programme seeks to embed Good Relations outcomes into the Council's flagship events around the St. Patrick's Day period. Many local and regional events, led by the Council take place annually, which have a cultural and artistic foundation to their core. However, the most visible and most public event is the annual Carnival Parade. As such, this years' Action Plan continues to support the participation and inclusion of those communities within the city who may ordinarily not participate in the Parade. This is important from the point of view of promoting positive cultural expression in a diverse City. This programme will therefore enhance the Council's civic complement for this period, ensuring that those events are focussed on achieving Good Relations outcomes and promoting positive cultural expression. It supports the Council's Peace Plus Action Plan and the Council's Cultural Strategy in developing festivals and events that are open and accessible to all.</p>
<p>2.16 Impacted Communities – Urban, Rural or both</p>	<p>Both. Impact will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 Delivery against the agreed cohesion indicators. 0 Peaceful and lawful cultural expression. 0 Greater inclusion in these important city-wide cultural expression activities. 0 Acknowledgement of good practice elsewhere. 0 Increased levels of trust.

2.01 PROGRAMME NAME		2.02 CODE		
Positive Cultural Expression Programme - Beacons		BCC3		
2.03 KEY WORDS	SIN-ID, URBAN, YOUTH, ADULT, SKILLS			
2.04 Programme Summary	<p>Cultural expression is supported on all sides of the community and is one of those touchstone issues for people, regardless of background including established and newcomer communities.</p> <p>This programme will support positive cultural expression especially regarded as important within the broad Unionist community but with a focus on cross community sharing and inclusion, and intra community development of understanding of Unionist cultural expression in a positive way.</p> <p>The programme will support the deployment of at least 18 Beacons for July events that are staged as an alternative to traditional 11th July bonfires and to complement this with funding for community events to host a cultural/community celebration.</p> <p>It may also explore good practice visits.</p>			
2.05 Contact details for programme staff	Emma Kennedy/Natasha Lynch:			
2.06 Total budgeted cost of programme (100%)	£40,000			
2.07 Total TEO contribution	£30,000			
2.08 Total target no. of participants	Direct	2,000	Indirect	500
2.09 Budgeted unit cost of programme	£20			
2.10 Targeted participant background analysis	100% PUL			
2.11 Name and post code of Programme HQ	Location	4-10 Linenhall Street	Postcode	BT2 8BP
2.12 Names and post codes for main areas of programme impact	Location	Newtownards Road - Charter N.I	Postcode	BT4 1HG
	Location	Donegall Road - GVRT	Postcode	BT12 6FQ
	Location	Shankill Road – Spectrum Centre	Postcode	BT13 3AA
	Location	Ballysillan Road – North Belfast Alternatives	Postcode	BT14 6SL
2.13 T:BUC Key Aim	Our Cultural Expression			

2.14 Link to good relations audit	<p>The Audit recognises that promoting positive Cultural Expression is still important and that work is still required including not just the celebration of culture, or the identity linked to it, but increasing understanding of what cultural practices mean, what they represent, and how it can be expressed positively.</p> <p>The Audit recognises that “while many people feel their cultural identity is respected, there is still a need to support the building of capacity for communities to engage on cultural issues that may increase understanding on a single identity basis while providing opportunity for cross-community engagement as a key part of this process”.</p> <p>Therefore, the approach to this programme will be to support people from the broad Unionist community in embedding a sense of confidence and pride and one’s own cultural identity particularly around the most significant period of celebration within this community. This programme therefore will support communities in the positive expression of their cultural heritage and identity through the provision and deployment of up to 18 beacons that will replace a traditional bonfire.</p> <p>For those communities who use a beacon, an additional resource for a community celebration event, around the beacon, will also be provided.</p> <p>Audit references are found in pages 6, 8, 13-14, 18-19, 30, 32-35, 37-39, 42-43 of the Good Relations Audit.</p>
2.15 Complementarity- include links with other Strategy’s e.g. Peace Plus, Urban Villages, MEDF etc	<p>This programme supports the work of the Council’s Good Relations, cleansing, community safety and community development goals. It seeks to also support other agencies such as DfI Roads, the NIHE, PSNI and the NIFRS. Through supporting better approaches to traditional bonfire events, there are not only operational benefits to agencies from this programme, but there are also significant cost savings to be made through this approach. It also supports the Council’s Peace Plus programmes on Cultural Heritage.</p>
2.16 Impacted Communities – Urban, Rural or both	<p>Urban. Impact will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delivery against the agreed cohesion indicators. ○ Important, peaceful and lawful cultural expression. ○ Greater inclusion in these important city-wide cultural expression activities. ○ Acknowledgement of good practice elsewhere. ○ Increased levels of trust.

2.01 PROGRAMME NAME	2.02 CODE
Building Trust and Celebrating an Intercultural Future	BCC4
2.03 KEY WORDS	DIVERSE, ADULTS, SENIOR
2.04 Programme Summary	<p>Like the civic engagement programme in previous Action Plans, this programme will continue to develop and deliver events and training on good relations/diversity. It will not just focus on ethnic minority or refugee communities, but given that 'trust building of public agencies' is a focus within the new audit, it will also include established communities especially where there has been/is ongoing issues of trust and support of public agencies.</p> <p>Key agencies include, without being definitive, agencies such as the Council, PSNI, youth service and the health trust.</p> <p>Events may include: Refugee Awareness, Living Library Events, Exploring aspects of the history and culture of faith, language and minority groups within the city as well as providing opportunities for residents to visit places and spaces across Belfast that they may not traditionally visit. This will enhance participants understanding of the diversity of our society, contributing to a greater appreciation of diversity and increased use of shared space.</p> <p>However, a significant focus will also be to introduce target groups to public agencies and develop an understanding of what they do, build relations with public agencies, and enhance trust with those agencies. Activities such as the annual Day of Reflection will not happen if they do not deliver outcomes related to increasing cohesion in the city. Activities marking Refugee Week, Black History Month, Eid, Good Relations Week, Holocaust Memorial Day, as well as running workshops around addressing Anti-Muslim Sentiment, Anti-Semitism and training programmes to support communities to address racism, may continue to be supported, as they make sufficient impact and focus on understanding the role of key agencies and increase trust in them. There is also a role for the Shared City Partnership to be a key player in linking the Council to Communities and within the Council on challenging issues.</p>
2.05 Contact details for programme staff	<p>Leish Dolan; dolani@belfastcity.gov.uk</p> <p>David Robinson; robinsondavid@belfastcity.gov.uk</p>
2.06 Total budgeted cost of programme (100%)	£20,000

2.07 Total TEO contribution	£15,000			
2.08 Total target no. of participants	Direct	500	Indirect	N/A
2.09 Budgeted unit cost of programme	£40			
2.10 Targeted participant background analysis	40% CNR, 40% PUL, 20% BME			
2.11 Name and post code of Programme HQ	Location	Belfast City Council	Postcode	BT2 8BP
2.12 Names and post codes for main areas of programme impact	Location	City wide	Postcode	All post codes
2.13 T:BUC Key Aim	Shared Community			
2.14 Link to good relations audit	<p>The current Audit identifies that the Council should maintain programmes on civic engagement and learning that engages staff, the public and elected members including on issues of cultural competence.</p> <p>The Audit reflects also on the need to increase trust in public agencies and that any activities should make real impact – be transformative rather than performative. Audit references are found in pages 6-11, 13, 14-16, 18-27, 30, 32, 36 of the Good Relations Audit.</p>			
2.15 Complementarity- include links with other Strategy's e.g. Peace Plus, Urban Villages, MEDF etc	<p>The proposals in this theme will support efforts within the City to build the knowledge of the diversity that exists within Belfast, with the additional aims of increasing cohesion related to those indicators agreed by the Shared City Partnership, of building trust with key public agencies including the Council.</p> <p>The proposals also compliment the results of the engagement that was undertaken on the development of the Council's PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan as well as ongoing work within the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and youth service. This also relates very strongly to the work on the Inequalities research and the Council's Racial Equality Strategy.</p>			
2.16 Impacted Communities – Urban, Rural or both	<p>Urban mostly, but open to all parts of the Council area.</p> <p>Impact will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> O Delivery against the agreed cohesion indicators. O Recognition of positives associated with diversity. O Cross community engagement in diversity activities. O Acknowledgement of good practice elsewhere. O Increased levels of trust especially between diverse communities and key public agencies. O Increased cultural competence. 			

2.01 PROGRAMME NAME		2.02 CODE		
TIME – The Inclusive Minority Ethnic programme		BCC5		
2.03 KEY WORDS	DIVERSE, ADULT, SENIOR, YOUTH			
2.04 Programme Summary	<p>Over the past number of years, the Council has been committed to promoting the integration and inclusion of Migrant and Minority Ethnic Communities and has developed strong links with these communities.</p> <p>This programme will build on this engagement and continue to support initiatives that seek to support the integration and inclusion of all Communities, through good relations related projects as well as supporting advice giving organisations.</p> <p>The following outlines key activity to be included within this programme:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continued facilitation of the Belfast-wide Migrant Forum 2. Delivery of programmes to support the integration and orientation for refugees and asylum seekers, with a particular focus on meeting specific needs within this community such as initiatives for young men 3. Support for local community groups to develop integration and inclusion activities and events including proposals to support the inclusion of the Roma Community 4. Develop initiatives to provide factual information and increase knowledge within communities. <p>Delivery partners such as Conway Education, Council Community centres, Belfast City of Sanctuary, Forward South, Law Centre, Red Cross, East Belfast Race Relations Forum, ACSONI, Acacia Path, Ashton Community Trust, Starling Collective, NI Somali Association, IOM, Whiterock Children's Centre and others will be engaged in project development and delivery as well as other statutory agencies such as the EA, TEO, PHA and the NIHE.</p>			
2.05 Contact details for programme staff	Leish Dolan; dolani@belfastcity.gov.uk			
2.06 Total budgeted cost of programme (100%)	£70,000			
2.07 Total TEO contribution	£52,500			
2.08 Total target no. of participants	Direct	1,000	Indirect	N/A
2.09 Budgeted unit cost of programme	£70			
2.10 Targeted participant background analysis	70% BAME, 15%CNR and 15%PUL			

2.11 Name and post code of Programme HQ	Location	Belfast City Council	Postcode	BT2 8BP
2.12 Names and post codes for main areas of programme impact	Location	City wide	Postcode	All post codes
		South Belfast		BT7 1FY
2.13 T:BUC Key Aim	Safe Community			
2.14 Link to good relations audit	<p>The new audit seeks to build on the work undertaken by the Council on supporting the participation and inclusion of Black and Asian minority ethnic residents, refugees and asylum seekers over the last number of years. In making recommendations on how to progress this work further, the Audit highlights the following as being key components for this Action Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop initiatives to address anti-Muslim hate. 2. Develop a programme focusing on minority ethnic leadership 3. Examine and explore the response of the Council's and communities in Britain, Ireland and further afield regarding managing diversity and tackling systemic racism. <p>Audit references are found in pages 6-7, 9-11, 13-16, 18-19, 36-39 of the Good Relations Audit.</p>			
2.15 Complementarity- include links with other Strategy's e.g. Peace Plus, Urban Villages, MEDF etc	<p>The proposals in this theme will support efforts within the city to promote the integration and inclusion of minority ethnic Communities across Belfast. The proposals also support the programmes within the Council's PEACEPLUS Plan, the Council's draft Racial Equality Action Plan as well as ongoing work within the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnerships to address hate crime.</p> <p>The Migrant Forum provides a city-wide platform to encourage collaborative working between partners across the city. It has a membership of over 50 organisations and provides networking, information sharing and opportunities for joint projects across the city. It is also used as a means by which the Council can consult and co-design policies with those from Ethnic Minority Communities. This includes the work on the Inequalities research and the Council's Racial Equality Strategy.</p> <p>We are also working with the Council's Equality Officers to ensure the integration and inclusion of new communities supports the delivery of the Belfast Agenda and the Inclusive Growth Strategy.</p>			

	<p>The proposals around the integration and inclusion of new communities fit with the overall themes of the Race Equality Strategy and will complement programmes funded under the Minority Ethnic Development Fund and other funds supporting this inclusion.</p>
2.16 Communities – Urban, Rural or both	<p>Urban. Impact will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 Delivery against the agreed cohesion indicators. 0 Ownership of diversity activities through the Migrant Forum. 0 Recognition of positives associated with diversity. 0 Cross community engagement in diversity activities. 0 Acknowledgement of good practice elsewhere. 0 Increased cultural competence.

2.01 PROGRAMME NAME		2.02 CODE		
The ICE Interface Communities Engagement Programme		BCC6		
2.03 KEY WORDS	WALLS, URBAN, YOUTH, ADULT			
2.04 Programme Summary	<p>This programme will support relationship building across interface communities. It will include an aim of facilitating progress towards the softening, transformation and/or removal of interface barriers through Good Relations engagement.</p> <p>However, the focus will be on the common social justice issues recognised in the audit and build a consensual approach to cross community plans to tackle those issues or their alleviation in the different communities.</p> <p>The Council will adopt and promote a common needs model; concentrating more on what are the common issues i.e. what are the common concerns within communities rather than what divides them.</p> <p>It would be anticipated that projects will be developed around issues such as education, health and wellbeing, employment, the environment etc.</p> <p>The delivery mechanism will be one of seeking project concepts from those organisations working at interface areas, through an 'open call' mechanism, to ensure that projects are locally relevant and meaningful.</p> <p>This approach will result in Good Relations outcomes and improved quality of life within communities at interface areas.</p>			
2.05 Contact details for programme staff	Natasha Lynch/Emma Kennedy:			
2.06 Total budgeted cost of programme (100%)	£70,000			
2.07 Total TEO contribution	£52,500			
2.08 Total target no. of participants	Direct	1,000	Indirect	5,000
2.09 Budgeted unit cost of programme	£70			
2.10 Targeted participant background analysis	45% CNR; 45% PUL; 10% BME			
2.11 Name and post code of Programme HQ	Location	Belfast City Council	Postcode	BT2 8BP
2.12 Names and post codes for main areas of programme impact	Location	Crumlin/Woodvale Road	Postcode	BT14 7EA/BT13 3BU
	Location	White City/Whitewell	Postcode	BT36 7JX

	Location	Falls Road /Shankill Road	Postcode	BT12 6FD /BT13 3AA
	Location	Antrim Road	Postcode	BT14 6BP
	Location	Black Mountain	Postcode	BT13 3TS
	Location	Thistle/Madrid Street	Postcode	BT54EE
	Location	Duncairn Gardens	Postcode	BT152GQ
2.13 T:BUC Key Aim	Safe Community			
2.14 Link to good relations audit	<p>The new audit highlights that much of the work of the Council in the area of Good Relations has been successful and should be continued. This includes those projects that are flexible and allow for the Council to be able to respond to local events in developing interventions at some of the most contested interfaces, which are also the least well-off communities in Northern Ireland. It further highlights the key role of Good Relations engagement in the transformation or removal of barriers.</p> <p>However, this can only be delivered with the participation, inclusion, agreement and consent of those who live closest to interface barriers or other disadvantaged communities, where issues such as poor health & well-being, educational attainment, poverty and employment prospects are significantly poorer for those residents as a result of ongoing segregation and division.</p> <p>A fair share type initiative will be considered where funding is only agreed when a project and proposed actions are developed and agreed by both sides of a community.</p> <p>Audit references are found in pages 6, 13, 18-26, 33-35, 36 of the Good Relations Audit.</p>			
2.15 Complementarity- include links with other Strategy's e.g. Peace Plus, Urban Villages, MEDF etc	<p>The Council's approach to working on interface issues is built on developing a Good Relations approach which in essence centres on building relationships within and between communities living at interface areas. This approach complements other NI Executive and T:BUC initiatives on interfaces, which includes transformation, removal and security issues.</p> <p>BCC also sits on the Interface Programme Board overseen by the Department of Justice and reports significant initiatives into this Board.</p> <p>Officers work closely with a range of community organisations, particularly groups that are not networked into formal CSV structures, statutory partners including DoJ, NIHE and DfC and is continuing to develop positive relationships with community-based organisations. This programme will also seek to support initiatives aimed at</p>			

	<p>succession planning within interface communities. Key community delivery partners will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belfast Interface Project - Greater Village Regeneration Trust - Marrowbone Community Association - New Beginnings - Our Club, Our Community (TAMHI) - Southcity Resource and Development Centre - Suffolk Community Forum - Duncairn Community Partnership - Upper Springfield Development Trust - Shankill Women's Centre - TACIT - LOCA - Whitwell Community Surgery - Forthspring Intercommunity Group - CCRF - Donegal Pass Community Enterprises - Blackmountain Shared Space - Colin Neighbourhood Partnership - Dunmurry Community Association - Market Development Association - Short Strand Community Forum - East Belfast Enterprise - Falls Community Council - Denmark Street Community Association
2.16 Communities – Urban, Rural or both	<p>Urban interface areas and other disadvantaged areas. Impact will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ① Cross community engagement on matters of common need. ① Acknowledgement of good practice elsewhere. ① Increased levels of trust especially between communities and key public agencies. ① Increased coordination across public agencies and Council. ① Increased trust between communities and with agencies.

2.01 PROGRAMME NAME	2.02 CODE
Shared Education and Relationships with Agencies	BCC7
2.03 KEY WORDS	YOUTH, URBAN, DIVERSE
2.04 Programme Summary	<p>This initiative will be delivered in partnership with Education Authority and will focus on developing an understanding of diversity with young people in schools, as well as uniformed and non-uniformed youth organisations. It will work in schools with teachers, parents and boards of governors. Diversity training and development is rarely a focus for adults in a school environment and often teachers lack confidence to deliver teaching on it.</p> <p>The initiatives developed will explore sensitive and controversial issues through a variety of engagement sessions and events.</p> <p>Teachers will be supported to plan a series of learning experiences for pupils that will explore areas which are meaningful to them within their local communities.</p> <p>Opportunities to engage with local councillors and other leaders (linking to developing trust of young people in key agencies) that help shape decisions within their communities will be provided, and progress made against the cohesion indicators.</p> <p>The programme will enable pupils to listen to, comment on and value the opinions of others who may be seen as different to them.</p> <p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide pupils with a voice that can help inform change within their local community. • Build positive relations between pupils from different religious and cultural backgrounds. • Explore sensitive and controversial issues on a shared basis • Build the capacity of teachers to facilitate pupil voice programmes through a Shared Education Partnership • Develop trust in key agencies. <p>The programme will also enable the participants to explore common needs that are relevant to them, for example, climate change and the environment, poverty, mental health or other common needs that traverse community boundaries.</p> <p>In 2025/26 the topics that the programme covered included issues concerning race hate, sectarianism and violence against women and girls. These are still priorities but we may focus also on the Shared City Partnership agreed cohesion indicators.</p>

2.05 Contact details for programme staff	Another GRO.....			
2.06 Total budgeted cost of programme (100%)	£20,000			
2.07 Total TEO contribution	£15,000			
2.08 Total target no. of participants	Direct	300	Indirect	N/A
2.09 Budgeted unit cost of programme	£66.67			
2.10 Targeted participant background analysis	PUL – 45%, CNR – 45%, BME – 10%			
2.11 Name and post code of Programme HQ	Location	Council Offices	Postcode	BT2 1FP
2.12 Names and post codes for main areas of programme impact	Location	TBC, but envisaged that all areas of the city would be involved	Postcode	
2.13 T:BUC Key Aim	Children and Young People			
2.14 Link to good relations audit	<p>The new audit highlighted the need to build on the positive relationship with EA following the success of the Stena Line Schools Programme and take the partnership to a new level.</p> <p>The Audit also highlighted the significant learning involved for young people, teaching staff, the whole school & parents through programmes such as this. Audit references are found in pages 6, 13, 18-27, 36-39 of the Good Relations Audit.</p>			
2.15 Complementarity- include links with other Strategy's e.g. Peace Plus, Urban Villages, MEDF etc	<p>The project will be important in developing links between local schools and Council initiatives and services as part of the overall project, for example, on challenging issues.</p> <p>The Education Authority (EA) are our key delivery partner on this project. This link ensures that this project also supports the key T:BUC Headline action on Shared Education.</p>			
2.16 Impacted Communities – Urban, Rural or both	<p>Urban. Impact will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ① Delivery against the agreed cohesion indicators. ① Increased levels of trust between young people and key agencies including Council. ① Engagement of adults involved in youth work or youth organisations. ① Development of capacity and cross community understanding of young people. ① Development of good practice. 			

2.01 PROGRAMME NAME		2.02 CODE		
Capacity and Cultural Competence Programme (3 C's)		BCC8		
2.03 KEY WORDS	URBAN, YOUTH, WALLS.			
2.04 Programme Summary	<p>The aim of the Programme is to develop capacity within the wider Council, communities and decision-makers in order to ensure a systemic approach to both the development, and delivery, of projects within the Council's new Good Relations Strategy with its wider impact on decision-making on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>There will be a significant number of cultural awareness/competency initiatives for elected members, staff of the Council, staff of other agencies, wider Council Departments and community organisations delivered through this programme, with the Shared City Partnership as a key driver.</p> <p>In addition, the Council will develop, and agree with elected members, a good relations/cohesion charter to support their engagement with each other and all communities.</p> <p>All activity will be required to meet at least one of the outcomes laid out in the T:BUC Strategy and align to the Council's Good Relations Strategy.</p>			
2.05 Contact details for programme staff	<p>Leish Dolan; dolani@belfastcity.gov.uk</p> <p>David Robinson; robinsondavid@belfastcity.gov.uk</p> <p>Natasha Lynch:</p> <p>Emma Kennedy:</p> <p>Godfrey McCartney:</p> <p>A GRO:</p>			
2.06 Total budgeted cost of programme (100%)	£28,862.20			
2.07 Total TEO contribution	£21,646.65			
2.08 Total target no. of participants	Direct	1,000	Indirect	N/A
2.09 Budgeted unit cost of programme	£28.86			
2.10 Targeted participant background analysis	40% CNR, 40% PUL, 20% BME			
2.11 Name and post code of Programme HQ	Location	Belfast City Council	Postcode	BT2 8BP
2.12 Names and post codes for main areas of programme impact	Location	All parts of the City	Postcode	All postcodes
2.13 T:BUC Key Aim	All four T:BUC Aims: Children & Young People, Safe and Shared Communities and Cultural Expression.			

2.14 Link to good relations audit	<p>The Council has sought to create programmes that meets the Council's strategic needs and those identified within several Audits; namely, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positively impact decision-making processes through enhanced cultural competence - Impact monitoring and evaluation of projects. - Create higher expectations for delivery that encourages change for the better. - Improves behaviour, language and relationships. - Deliver transformative initiatives <p>Embedding Good Relations outcomes into routine public service provision is a key function of the Good Relations Agenda.</p> <p>Audit references are found in pages 13-14, 16, 18-19, 36-39, 42, 50 of the Good Relations Audit.</p>
2.15 Complementarity- include links with other Strategy's e.g. Peace Plus, Urban Villages, MEDF etc	<p>This strategic approach to Good Relations work not only complements wider Council initiatives but enhances them. It broadens out the work of Good Relations into groups from a range of other Council Departments as well as other sectors to engage with the collective delivery of Good Relations outcomes.</p> <p>This not only complements Council initiatives that are seeking to deliver social outcomes, but it also will ensure that those initiatives will contain specific Good Relations actions and outcomes in their projects.</p>
2.16 Impacted Communities – Urban, Rural or both	<p>Urban: Impact will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 Delivery against the agreed cohesion indicators. 0 Increased capacity of decision-makers and influencers within public agencies and communities. 0 Increased trust and respect. 0 Better engaged and impactful Shared City Partnership. 0 Better understanding of good practice. 0 Better engagement with Council and other agencies. 0 Delivery on the good relations charter. 0 Increased coordination across public agencies and Council. 0 Increased trust between communities and with agencies.

Section 3

Action Plan Programme Outcome Summary Table 2024/25

Programme name (2.01)	Code (2.02)	Key Aim (2.13)	No. direct participants (2.08)	Total Cost (2.06)	Total TEO contribution (2.07)	Post Codes (2.11)
Good relations small grants programme	BCC1	All 4 T:BUC Aims	2,500	£180,000	£135,000	BT2 8BP BT4 1AF BT7 2EW BT12 6FD BT13 3AA BT14 6BP
St. Patrick's Day Civic Events Programme	BCC2	Cultural Expression	500	£20,000	£15,000	BT1 (City Centre)
Positive Cultural Expression Programme	BCC3	Cultural Expression	2,000	£40,000	£30,000	BT4 1HG BT12 6FQ BT13 3AA BT14 6SL
Building Trust & Celebrating an Intercultural Future	BCC4	Shared Community	500	£20,000	£15,000	All postcodes. Activities open to the public.
The Inclusive Minority Ethnic programme	BCC5	Safe Community	1,000	£70,000	£52,500	BT2 8BP BT7 1FY
Interface Communities Engagement Programme	BCC6	Safe Community	1,000	£70,000	£52,500	BT2 8BP BT14 7EA BT13 3BU BT36 7JX BT12 6FD BT13 3AA BT14 6BP BT13 3TS BT5 4EE BT15 2GQ
Shared Education & Relationship with Agencies	BCC7	Children and Young People	300	£20,000	£15,000	TBC
Capacity & Cultural Competence Programme	BCC8	All four T:BUC Aims	1,000	£28,862.19	£21,646.64	City-wide. All postcodes

Section 4

T:BUC Strategic Outcome

Note: two programmes cover all 4 T:BUC aims, therefore a quarter of these two programmes has been apportioned to the table below.

	C&YP	Shared community	Safe community	Cultural Expression	Council Total	TEO Total
Total no. of programmes	1 (plus two quarters)	1 (plus two quarters)	2 (plus two quarters)	2 (plus two quarters)	8	8
Total no. of direct participants	1,175	1,375	2,875	3,375	8,800	8,800
Unit cost of programme activity	£61.46	£52.52	£66.88	£33.25	£51.00	£51.00
Total Council cost of programmes	£18,053.89	£18,053.89	£48,053.89	£28,053.89	£112,215.56	
Total TEO cost of Programmes	£54,161.66	£54,161.66	£144,161.66	£84,161.66	£336,646.64	

Annex A to be completed to cover the Section 75 categories for each programme.

Programme Name	Programme Number	Section 75 Categories										
		Persons of Different Genders	Persons of Different Religious Beliefs	Persons of Different Political Opinion	Different Racial Groups	Different Age Groups	Persons of Different Marital Status	Persons of Different Sexual Orientations	Dependants		Disabilities	
									Persons With	Persons Without	Persons with	Persons without
Good Relations Small Grants Programme	BCC1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Both		Both	
St. Patrick's Day Civic Events Programme	BCC2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Both		Both	
Positive Cultural Expression Programme- Beacons	BCC3	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Both		Both	
Building Trust and Celebrating an Intercultural Future	BCC4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Both		Both	
TIME – The Inclusive Minority Ethnic programme	BCC5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Both		Both	
Interface Communities Engagement Programme (ICE)	BCC6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Both		Both	
Shared Education and Relationship with Agencies	BCC7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Both		Both	
Capacity & Cultural Competence Programme (3 C's)	BCC8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Both		Both	

Agenda Item 9a

Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum Tuesday 13th January 2026

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Ciaran Beattie
Councillor Natasha Brennan
Councillor Sarah Bunting
Councillor Séamas de Faoite
Councillor Jenna Maghie
Councillor Brian Smyth

Officers:

John Walsh, Chief Executive
Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services
Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance
Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Kate Bentley, Director of Planning & Building Control
David Sales, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services
Jim Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Pól Hamilton, Lead Officer, Community Provision
Cate Taggart, Neighbourhood Services Manager
Geoff Dickson, Strategic Planning & Policy Manager (secretariat)

1. Summer Community Diversionary Fund

The Director of Neighbourhood Services updated the Forum on the revised criteria for the Summer Community Diversionary Fund, the timetable for the fund and proposed funding models. Members present were supportive of the approach and agreed the proposals should be brought to Committee, seeking authority to have the fund over a three year period, with a strict provision that there are break clauses built in to each contract that would allow a contract to be reviewed on an annual basis.

2. Finance Update

The Director of Finance provided an update on the setting of the district rate for 2026/27. He advised that Party Group Briefings have been completed and that the upcoming SP&R workshop on 15th January would be used to discuss the rates setting for 2026/ 27.

3. Physical Activity & Sports Development Strategy

The Director of Neighbourhood Services presented a high level overview of the draft Physical Activity & Sports Development Strategy to Members. The Director outlined the research

undertaken and their findings, the vision for the strategy, the six key priorities, next steps in finalising the draft strategy and an outline of some funding options that will be brought to Members with the strategy.

Members thanked The Director for the update and suggested that, when consulting on the strategy following Committee approval, that organisations who have been involved in using sport as a means of tackling deprivation and health inequalities should be consulted with as their experience and expertise would be invaluable.

Members requested that, given the significance of the strategy, it be brought to Party Group Briefings in advance of being brought to Committee.

4. Community Support Plan – Large Grants

The Director of Neighbourhood Services referred to the approach agreed by SP&R Committee for the new large grant funding programme 2026-2029 as part of the overall new Community Support Plan 2025-2029. He outlined the grant process to date, the staged process of assessing applications and an anonymised summary of the outcome of the assessment process. The Director also outlined how the total value of grant applications that were assessed at stage 2 were greater than the financial envelope currently agreed for the grants.

The Director agreed to circulate the Community Support Plan slides presented to Party Group Leaders for further consideration in advance of discussion at the SP&R workshop on 15th January. Following the workshop, a report will be brought to SP&R Committee on 23rd January.

5. Planning Update

The Director of Planning & Building Control updated the Forum on the live planning applications that will be brought to January Committee.

Following a query from a Member, it was agreed to invite Tribeca to a Party Group Leader meeting for an update on progress.

Following a separate query from a Member, the Director of Planning & Building Control reiterated that major development applications with 100% social housing are legally

competent from a planning perspective. This has been reiterated to officers and will be communicated to developers as enquiries are made.

A Member informed the Director that the monthly update on applications received was no longer received by Members. The Director undertook to ensure these are recommenced.

6. AOB

Procedure for Renaming Streets

The Director of Neighbourhood Services outlined the current process for street renaming, the relevant legislation and the procedural considerations relating to the re-naming of streets in the city.

Members agreed that a report be brought to SP&R Committee explaining the current street re-naming policy.

Bonfires

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reported that some potential bonfire materials had been left at a number of sites on Council and non-Council land.

Following a query from a Member regarding one of the sites, the Director of Planning & Building Control agreed to consider the options regarding dangerous notices. It was also confirmed that the NIEA have cleared a site.

A Member noted that at one site some bonfire materials have moved closer to an interface, housing and a major road. The Director of Neighbourhood Services confirmed that the site will be closely monitored.

Illuminate Request

The City Solicitor outlined for Members an illuminate request received for Belfast Mela on 30th August 2026. Members noted the request would be agreed under the City Solicitors delegated authority.

Issues raised by a Member

A Member requested that a report be brought to SP&R Committee on the use of social medial channels and the potential to stop the Council from using X. It was agreed that a report would be brought to SP&R Committee on 23 January.



Subject:	Requests for use of the City Hall
Date:	23 January 2026
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Christopher Burns, Interim Functions and Exhibition Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X	
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number	<input type="text"/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	This paper, together with the attached appendix, contains the recommended approach in respect of each of the requests by external organisations for access to the City Hall function

	rooms received up to 2 January 2026.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve the recommendations as set out in Appendix 1.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Background Information</u>
3.1	The current criteria for use of the function rooms used to review external applications is set out below.
3.2	Functions permitted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> functions which support other events in the city and which are of demonstrable economic benefit to Belfast whether organised by the council or not. functions which demonstrably enhance the city's image nationally or internationally as a desirable commercial, business or tourist destination. functions designed to celebrate or commemorate a notable achievement or significant anniversary (25, 50, 100 years) by an organisation or body with close links to the city or province. functions organised by recognised local community or voluntary sector groups for non-profit and non-political purposes.
3.3	Functions not permitted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> conferences, meetings, seminars, performances, wedding receptions, private parties or receptions and similar booking requests in the prestige function rooms. functions, which have as their principal purpose the generation of commercial gain for the organisers. Charity-fundraising functions are managed by the Lord Mayor's Office. functions which have no compelling links to the council or the city specifically and which could instead use local private sector facilities. functions which have as their primary purpose the advancement of any political or religious cause or campaign or are otherwise potentially contentious or involve significant reputation risks for the council. functions which involve exceptionally large or disruptive set-ups or pose a real and tangible risk to the fabric of the building or grounds.
3.4	<u>Key Issues</u> Committee will recall that at its meeting on 24 th May 2024, it considered an update on the City Hall Income Generation Project. Committee was advised that charging for the use of the Council's function rooms would be considered as part of a later stage of this project. Pending this work being brought to Committee, delegated authority was given to the City Solicitor and

	Director of Legal & Civic Services to depart from the existing charging structure and negotiate room hire charges for commercial type events. Work has been undertaken looking at a review of the current pricing structure and a report is also being presented to Committee this month with proposals for event charging from April 2026 onwards.
3.5	The standard charging structure will apply to the events listed in the Schedule at Appendix 1 up until the end of the current financial year. Events from April 2026 onwards will not have prices confirmed to organisers until conclusion of current review.
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.6	None, any recommendations for hospitality will be met from existing budgets.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.7	None.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Schedule of function requests received up to 2 January 2026.

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JANUARY 2026 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
Belfast Chamber	19 February 2026	Governor of Bank of England Business Lunch - A 2 course Lunch with speeches and a fireside chat with Bank of England Governor, Andrew Bailey. Numbers attending – 100	B	£450
Visit Belfast	5 March 2026	Great Neighbourhood Days Out direct engagement evening session between neighbourhood tourism providers and group-travel organisers with presentations and networking. Numbers attending - 65	A & B	£450
East Belfast Community Development Agency	26 March 2026	Inspire Celebration Event – an annual celebration of young people in East Belfast with awards and showcase performances. Numbers attending – 150	D	Current rate free as registered charity
Wheelworks Arts	31 March 2026	Create Against Hate NI: Activities Toolkit Public Launch - Launch of resources developed to guide adults to help young people address issues such as hate crime, foster inclusion, and support the integration of new communities in Belfast. Numbers attending - 100	D	Current rate free as registered charity
NOW Group	2 June 2026	NOW Group Participant Graduation 2026 is an annual celebration event recognising the achievements of participants through the support of NOW group over the previous year Numbers attending – 312	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
MW Advocate Ltd	24 June 2026	Summit of the Cities 2026 will bring together leaders and delegates from all 12 cities across the island of Ireland to celebrate their history, share ideas, forge partnerships, and accelerate practical action on the issues shaping urban life with panel discussion and speeches. Numbers attending – 300-400	B	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

JANUARY 2026 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

Queens University Belfast	7 July 2026	Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) International Conference on Supercomputing Reception – Standing reception with speeches and catering Numbers attending – 180	A	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Business in the Community	25 November 2026	2025 Environment and Climate Report Launch brings together 200 sustainability professionals to recognize the 150 organisations who took part in the report which aims to improve environmental efforts in a range of sectors. Numbers attending – 200	B & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Community Sport Network	7 December 2026	20th Anniversary Celebration event with gala dinner and reception followed by presentations which will showcase how sport and physical activity have been used as inclusive, non-political tools to support positive outcomes for individuals, communities and wider society. Numbers attending – 200	C & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
2027				
Albertbridge Accordion Band	4 September 2027	Albertbridge Accordion Band's 70th Anniversary – Reception followed by performance and concluding with meal and speeches to celebrate community band formed in 1957 and honour founding members now in early 80s. Numbers attending – 150	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>



Subject:	Request for use of City Hall grounds for various events in 2026
Date:	23 January 2026
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Christopher Burns, Interim Functions and Exhibition Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 	
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <p>After Committee Decision <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>After Council Decision <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Sometime in the future <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Never <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	

1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues	
1.1	To consider requests from various clients for the use of City Hall grounds; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yom HaShoah Holocaust Memorial Event – 12 April 2026 • Belfast Photo Festival – 1 June 2026 – 30 June 2026

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Cancer Breast Foot Forward Walk – 5 June 2026 • Féile Rock's Pride Concert – TBC
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Authorise the use of City Hall grounds on the dates noted above. 2. Authorise the events to take place on the basis of submission of an event management plan and risk assessment to ensure delivery of a safe public events.
3.0	Main report
	<p><u>Background Information</u></p> <p>3.1 Members will be aware that requests for the use of City Hall are normally dealt with under the authority delegated by the Committee to the Director of Legal and Civic Services using criteria agreed for this purpose. Occasionally however, it is necessary to place such requests directly before the Committee and the requests set out below falls into this category.</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>3.2 A number of requests have been received for events over the summer 2026 period and this report seeks to update members on larger events using City Hall grounds, due to the larger scale of activities involved it is deemed necessary to seek Committee approval.</p> <p><u>The Proposed events</u></p> <p>3.3 The proposed events would take place on the front lawns only and areas such as the Titanic Garden and Cenotaph will remain open to the public. Access to the City Hall building will not be affected.</p> <p>3.4 The events would be free to enter. In each case the organisers would be providing all stewarding/marshalling staff & first aiders and would of course have to comply with the usual conditions including indemnities for damage and submission of a formal event management plan.</p> <p><u>12 April 2026 - “Yom HaShoah” Holocaust Memorial Event</u></p> <p>3.5 This event has been successfully accommodated in City Hall grounds 5 times since 2018. The event organised by March of Life UK brings around 200 people together with some speeches and music around the theme of Holocaust Memorial. The event lasts for around 1 hour. The grounds are accessible throughout the event to visitors and previous events have taken place in the grounds without incident.</p>

	<p><u>1 June 2026 – 30 June 2026 – Belfast Photo Festival - Outdoor Exhibition</u></p> <p>3.6 The organiser of the Belfast Photo Festival (BPF) has asked to have place a photographic exhibition in the grounds of the City Hall from 1 – 30 June 2026. City Hall has hosted a display by the festival annually since 2014. Exhibition content will be placed across the West allowing the East lawn to remain available for recreational use and for other events to be hosted. The theme for 2026 Photo Festival exhibition is ‘Horizons’ and will invite artists and audiences to consider what lies beyond our present environmental, social, economic, technological and geopolitical boundaries. There will be 6 exhibition framework structures installed on the West Lawn of City Hall grounds on 1 June and dismantled on 30 June 2026. It would be free for members of the public to view daily in line with the opening times of the grounds. Belfast Photo Festival have a dedicated Front of House Team who will be roaming throughout their open-air public exhibitions across the city. They will engage with visitors/publics to talk about the work, as well as ensure any maintenance, graffiti or other issues arising. Good Relations and Corporate Communications will review the exhibition images included in the proposal but presently no negative good relations implications identified that should stop the exhibition being hosted at City Hall. A copy of the exhibition proposal is included in Appendix 1.</p> <p><u>5 June 2026 - “Breast Foot Forward” Charity Walk</u></p> <p>3.7 The Breast Foot Forward walk has taken place at City Hall since 2014, it is Action Cancer’s flagship fundraising event and raises circa £60,000 each year. City Hall is the starting point for the event with entertainment and warm up activities before 800 participants take part in 5k or 10k walk around Belfast returning to City Hall as the end point. An annual event in City Hall calendar and delivered without incident.</p> <p><u>25 July 2026 – “Féile Rock’s Pride” Concert</u></p> <p>3.8 The annual “Féile Rock’s Pride” event is organised by Feile an Phobail featuring local young and emerging bands from all sections of the community and the type of music played includes Rock, Blues, Heavy Metal, Rap Ska and Reggae. The organisers require use of the grounds between 8.00am and 7.30pm for stage and sound set ups and strip downs. The event itself takes place between 2.00pm and 6.00pm. Depending on the weather the event could attract up 2,000 people. The profile of those attending includes family and followers of the bands, plus local and overseas visitors in the city for the day. plan etc. Previous events have taken place in the grounds without incident.</p>
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	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.9	There would be no costs for the council as the various organisers would bear any/all stewarding and equipment costs etc themselves. The utilities costs on the day are of a very minor nature and the normal event support in the form of electrical and water provision in the grounds will be provided.
3.10	There are no concerns from an asset management point of view, although the organisers would be required to provide the usual insurances, indemnities, and obligations.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.11	Good Relations will review the exhibition content within Photo Festival request, but it is not envisaged that there will be any direct good relations, equality or rural needs implications arising from this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Exhibition Proposal Belfast Photo Festival 2026

CITY HALL LAWN PROPOSAL

1 – 30 JUNE 2026



**BELFAST
PHOTO FESTIVAL**



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BELFAST PHOTO FESTIVAL

Belfast Photo Festival is the largest annual photography festival in the UK and Ireland. Spanning over 30 venues, it presents cutting-edge contemporary photography from local, national, and international artists. The festival not only showcases exceptional work but also creates wide audience engagement, social impact and development opportunities for photographic artists. It contributes to the wider visual arts sector and Belfast's living culture.

Belfast Photo Festival is a charitable organisation that for over 15 years, has fostered commissions, entrepreneurial initiatives, and global arts leadership. We take pride in our adaptability, innovation, and resilience, allowing us to continuously engage with national and international audiences, positively impacting communities and society.

Belfast Photo Festival demonstrates strong financial stability, governance, and impact evaluation, reflected in a diverse portfolio of funders and income sources that include core support, project grants, earned revenue, and in-kind contributions.

Through photography, arguably the most accessible and popular art forms, we are determined to make a lasting, positive social and environmental impact through engaging both seasoned art enthusiasts and new audiences alike.

2025 FESTIVAL STATISTICS

Number of days: **25**

Number of artists shown: **100+**

Number of exhibitions: **35**

Number of Events, Talks and Tours: **31**

Number of visitors: **400,000+**



CORE FUNDER AND HOST OF ARTWORK BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

“Belfast City Council is proud to support the Belfast Photo Festival. Opening up access to creativity and encouraging people to consider current environmental issues. I congratulate the team on curating such a thought-provoking programme and seeing people of all ages and backgrounds enjoy the exhibitions.”

- Belfast Lord Mayor, Councillor Micky Murray.



**Belfast
City Council**



CORE FUNDER ARTS COUNCIL OF NORTHERN IRELAND

“For 15 years Belfast Photo Festival has enriched cultural life within the city, showcasing incredible works of art in memorable and often unexpected places . The festival celebrates some of the very best of our local, contemporary artists, as well as the opportunity to view work from acclaimed international photographers. The Arts Council is delighted to support Belfast Photo Festival, thanks to funding from The National Lottery, and would encourage everyone to go along and enjoy the festival programme this June.”

- Joanna Johnston, visual arts and collections officer, Arts Council of Northern Ireland

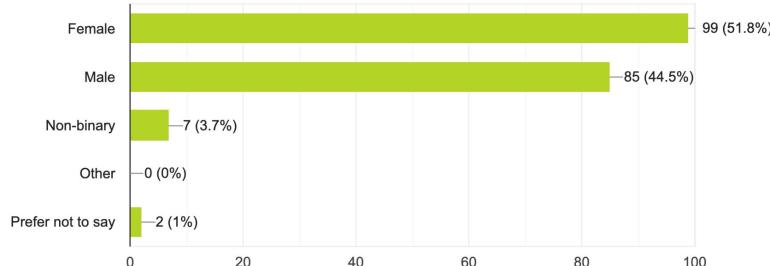


FESTIVAL AUDIENCE STATISTICS

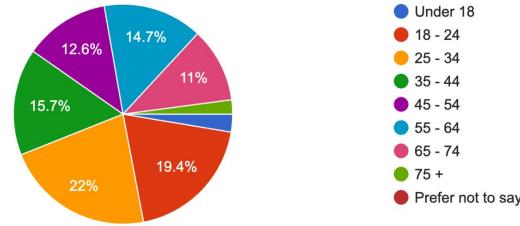
I'm just out of school and want to learn more about the art scene and got a lot of information about the art opportunities in Belfast.
- Festival Attendee



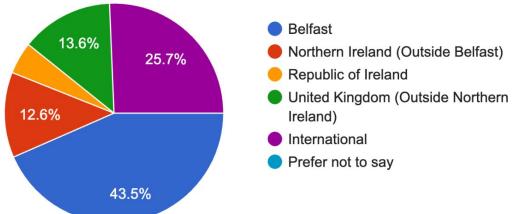
Gender



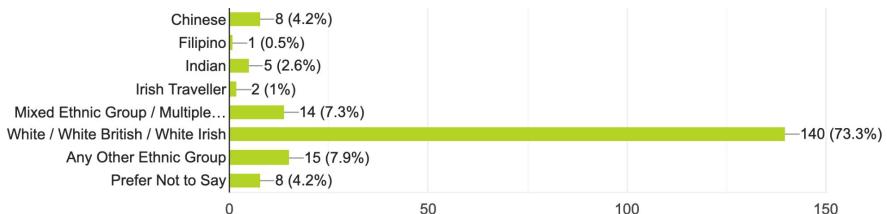
Age



Location



Ethnicity



PREVIOUS OUTDOOR EXHIBITIONS



Since 2013, Belfast Photo Festival has been producing exhibitions and art works for outdoor display across the city, including the City Hall and Botanic Gardens.



2026 FESTIVAL THEME: HORIZON

Par
age
G

The Festival theme, Horizons, invites artists and audiences to consider what lies beyond our present environmental, social, economic, technological and geopolitical boundaries. In doing so, it harnesses photography's long history as a means of bearing witness to the world's vastness, and positions the medium as a catalyst for reflection and collective action.

For many, horizons represent the unknown, the uncharted territories awaiting exploration and experience. Beyond that boundary lie untold stories, adventures yet to be undertaken and dreams and potential waiting to be realised.

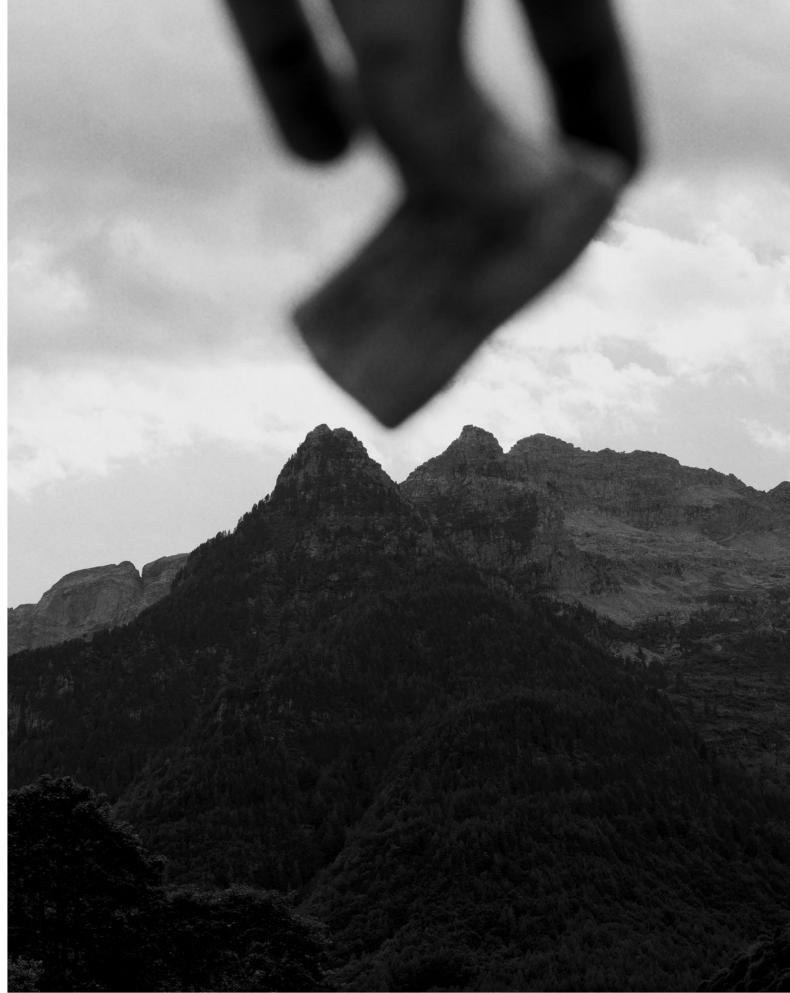


PROPOSED ARTWORKS FOR CITY HALL

Sabine Hess: one bed, two blankets, seventy-six rules

“one bed, two blankets, seventy-six rules” is the first collaboration between the artist couple Sabine Hess and Nicolas Polli. Living before in a long distance relationship, the project documents their trial of living together for the first time. In a humorous and experimental way, the two artists play with norms and ideas surrounding their perception of a “relationship”, giving themselves the freedom to create an intimate body of work. Embedded in the surrounding of the place where they initially met, they confront both the human and creative aspects of living together as a couple. The viewer is invited to enter their new home: A place that, similarly to their relationship, is still in transformation and adaption. A selection of texts are part of the work - they are findings by the artists that reflect on the challenges they experienced during this time. A set of rules of how to navigate a life as a couple but also a personal manifesto of how to grow together. The book was published in 2023 and is available on Ciao Press.







**Work together,
not against each other**

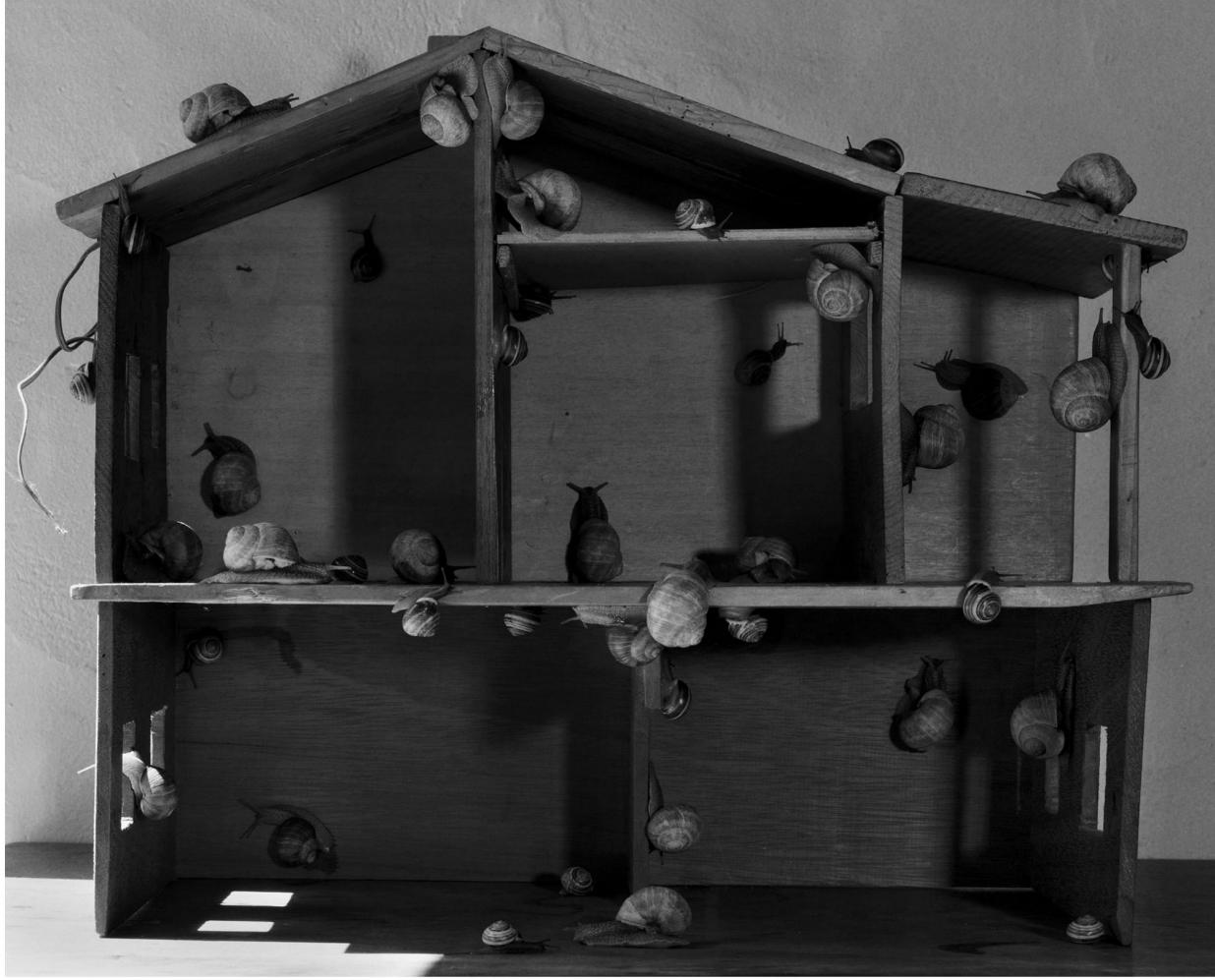








Grow hobbies together



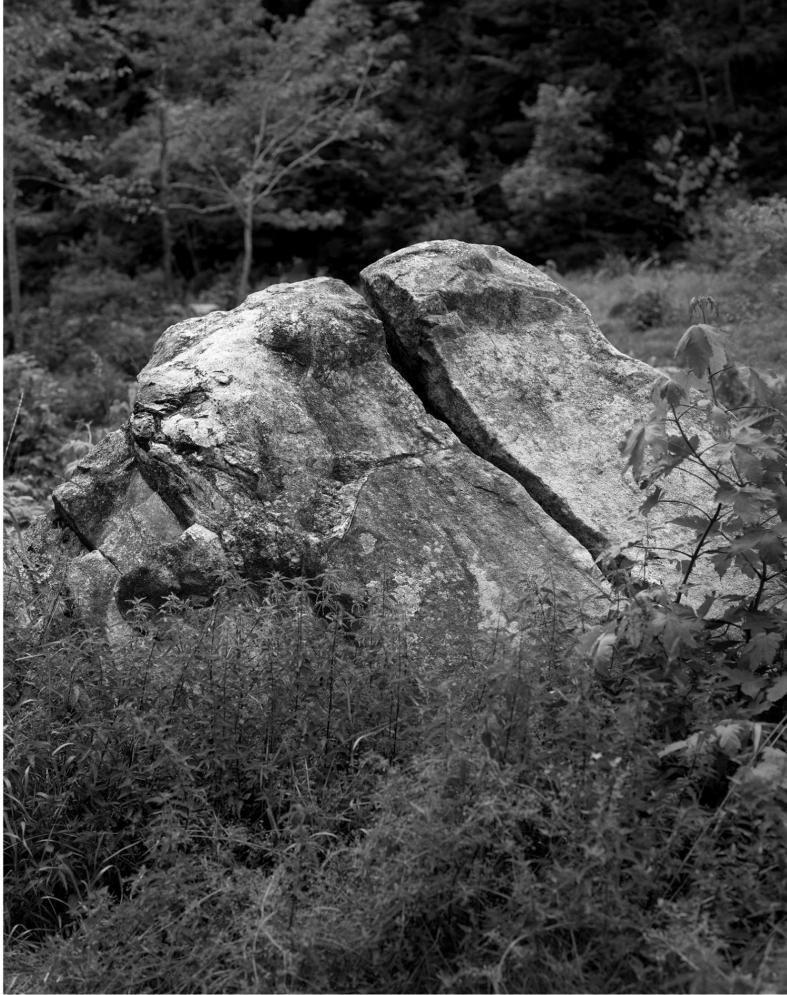




**Do not start a serious discussion
before the first coffee of the day**



**Do not hide your feelings,
your partner will sense them
anyway**





OUTDOOR EXHIBITION INSTALLATION



C-Bond Triangular Displays

Artworks: 6 structures, Size: 1500mm x 2100mm. (Three images per display unit)

Displayed as presented in these photographic examples from June 2025



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PROPOSED EXHIBITION LAYOUT

