Stories Audit

May 2023

454-1

29th April 76

Dear Friend,

replied 12 May
info + tele no.

I am replying to your advertisement in the Belfast Telegraph. I feel a little bit guilty about writing to you as I have no specific problem, other than that I am homosexual and that life in general is consequently a bit more difficult. I have read the article about your work in Fortnight magazine so I don't think you'll mind my letter. I am a stranger in this city a situation which is a bit of a mixed blessing as I find it difficult to make any real personal contacts. I would be grateful for any assistance or support which you would be able to give me. Please accept a small donation towards your work and thank you for coming.

Yours sincerely

D44457/21/5/2/7 (p0A1Q2)

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

This report is based on an audit of first-person story collections relating to Belfast, completed by the creative practice and consultancy Starling Start from December 2022 – May 2023 on behalf of Belfast City Council.

The audit produced a **catalogue of 100 story collections** / **projects**, the majority of which are held by independent organisations working in the community / voluntary sector or in culture, arts and heritage. The catalogue accompanies this report as a searchable spreadsheet which can be used in ongoing research and updated as plans for Belfast Stories develop further.

The research began with **sector mapping** (Chapter 4) to identify the range of organisations and bodies involved in collecting. Next, we held a series of **discovery conversations** with stakeholders and experts in the field (Chapter 5), revealing a wide variety of specific collections to be audited and highlighting the depth of knowledge and insight to be gained from collection holders, community representatives and subject matter experts. Drawing on these discovery conversations is a series of four **story collection case studies** (Chapter 6). Each one highlights important considerations for ongoing partnerships, including ethical considerations, accessibility, representation, rights and preservation of collections.

The report goes on to describe some key findings of our initial **analysis** of the catalogue of story collections (Chapters 7 & 8), highlighting collections by sector, overarching themes and content tags to provide a sense of the variety of story collections, their context and contents.

Finally, the report considers **barriers** to ongoing partnership working and accessing collections (Chapter 9) and offers several key recommendations to overcome these, and we propose a **roadmap** for ongoing story collection partnership programmes (Chapter 10).

A free person tells her own story. A valued person lives in a society in which her story has a place.

Rebecca Solnit (2017).

1. Introduction

Belfast Stories will be a new visitor attraction on the corner of North Street and Royal Avenue, including the iconic art deco former Bank of Ireland building, constructed in 1930. An exciting and authentic experience with Belfast's people and personality at its heart, Belfast Stories aims to attract both tourists and locals. As part of the Belfast Region City Deal, it also aims to help regenerate the city and surrounding areas. There are three main experiences within or parts to the visitor attraction: stories, screen and social.

Stories featured will be first-person accounts of the city by the people who call it home or have a connection with the place. These stories will be discovered through an ambitious citywide story collection programme that will involve uncovering the stories that are already held by museums, archives, local history groups, communities and others, in addition to collecting new stories, particularly accounts of life in the

city from individuals and groups whose stories have been under-represented.

In December 2022, Starling Start was appointed to undertake an audit of existing collections and story-related programmes. This report outlines the approach taken to undertaking the audit, in line with the brief set by Belfast City Council, which was:

- completion of audit in line with mapping tool
- analysis of findings including identification of trends and gaps
- identification of any access issues or barriers to partnership working
- recommendations and roadmap for ongoing story collection partnership programmes.

The audit was carried out between December 2022 and May 2023. It reflects a moment in time and builds a foundation for further research on the city's rich heritage of storytelling and oral history.

In the scullery, my Nanny had a jawbox sink and there was no hot water in those days, only a cold water tap... The water used to run, it went out into an open gully in the yard – so my Granda used to help us make paper boats, and we used to sail them down that.

A woman reflects on her 1960s childhood in East Belfast.

2.   The Research Team

Starling Start Limited is a creative practice and consultancy with a focus on arts, place and collaboration. Starling Start undertakes a diverse range of strategic arts and creative placemaking projects that are rooted in understanding place and creating positive change.

Stories of place are central to the way we collaborate, allowing us to listen and to learn about people's connections to places. We firmly believe that these stories can help cross boundaries of languages and cultures; enhance a collective sense of community; and define our own identity.

The audit was undertaken by Amberlea Neely and Dr Conor McCafferty with additional research by Morag Stuart.

Find out more about the work of Starling Start by visiting https://www.starlingstart.com/

3. Methodology

Our methodology for the audit of existing collections and story related programmes both *uncovered the stories that are already held by museums, archives, local history groups, communities and others,* and *made recommendations for collecting new stories, particularly those people and groups whose stories may not yet have been heard.* The approach is based on established practice and theoretical tools that we have refined through numerous creative and research projects.

Sector Mapping

We co-developed, with the Belfast Stories Team, a visual tool in the form of a stakeholder map. The mapping initially focused on sectors and this was enhanced with the addition of umbrella groups, organisations and projects that held collections. The map was used to select stakeholders across several sectors that would help us build the first phase of the audit and to develop the engagement plan.

Discovery Conversations

Discovery conversations in the form of face-to-face semi-structured interviews were held with 19 people to gather primary data for the audit. These discussions were partly structured to follow the Stories Collection Framework developed by Lord Cultural Resources. However, we were keen to keep the conversations open-ended to allow us to gather other pertinent information about collections and identify additional leads. We also participated in group discussions with the Belfast Stories Equity Steering Group and a Belfast Stories Roundtable with individuals who work in diverse practices of story collecting.

These Discovery Conversations were not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, they offer complementary information from a range of sources coming from different parts of the city and with different sectoral expertise. In most cases, the researchers invited interviewees to take part based on their subject area expertise or community background. In some cases, the interviewee

approached us with an offer to contribute and where we felt this would add a new perspective that would strengthen the audit we have included it. It is important to emphasise that these discovery conversations are not a comprehensive overview of story collecting in the city, but they offer starting points that highlight stakeholders' lived experiences and deep expertise. As the development of Belfast Stories proceeds, Belfast City Council plans to engage widely with stakeholders across the city.

Desk Research

We followed up the Discovery Conversations with desk research, producing over 150 potential project leads. Data was collected in line with a modified version of the Stories Collection Framework, with additional fields added to aid categorisation and analysis. Desk research involved immersion in a wide variety of story collections, exploring their context and contents through online exhibitions, print publications, podcasts and moving image media.

Case Studies

Based on the discovery conversations and desk research, we identified four projects to explore further in detailed case studies. While no single project can represent a specific sector, each case study offers rich contextual information that is pertinent to the development of Belfast Stories and which will help engagement with similar projects: 'Making Ends Meet in the Past', an academic oral history research project on poverty and urban life (Chapter 6.1); Cara-Friend Letters Archive, a collection of anonymised letters from LGBTQI+ people seeking support in the city in the 1970s and 1980s (Chapter 6.2); NVTV, a community broadcast media archive (Chapter 6.3); Carrick Hill, an inner urban community and near-neighbour to the Belfast Stories site (Chapter 6.4).

Analysis

Using the data collected through the Stories Collection Framework, we catalogued collections of Belfast Stories to audit existing resources, conduct thematic analysis through coding, identify gaps in

collection areas and identify barriers to engagement and partnership working.

Recommendations

Following analysis, we developed recommendations. We based the roadmap on a Theory of Change and a Logic Model, which offers a framework and the rationale to show potential next steps for story collection, and the impact that it will have.

4.   Sector Mapping

Sector Mapping was the starting point for the audit. From this initial map (**Figure 1** below), we were able to target potential partners for Belfast Stories including educational institutions, community / voluntary sector organisations, broadcast media institutions, and libraries and archives. The result is not meant to be final or definitive, but does indicate the broad range of organisations, institutions and projects involved in story collecting relating to the city and which should be considered stakeholders in the Belfast Stories project. Engagement with these organisations will also lead to discovery of additional stakeholders. ***See also:*** 'Collections by Sector' in Chapter 8.
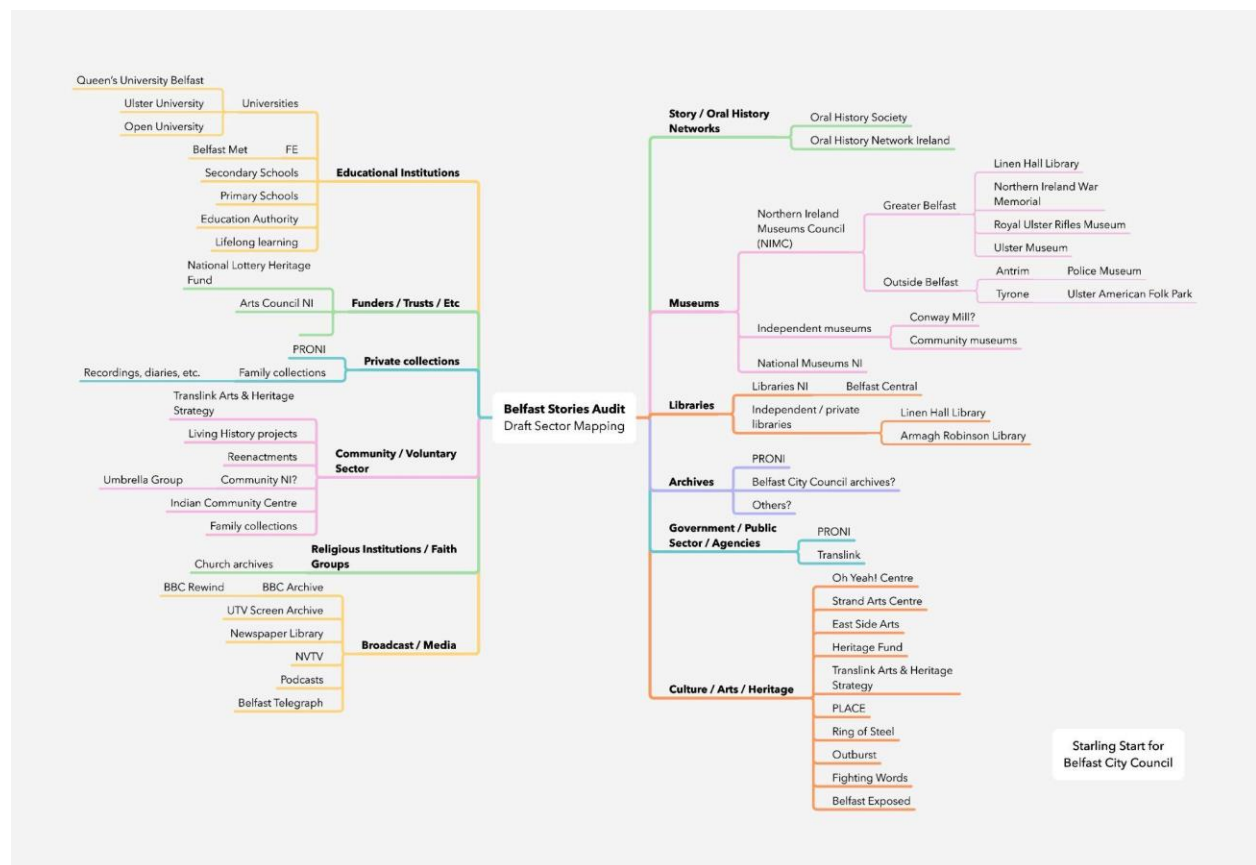

Figure 1. Sector Mapping, December 2022.

5.   Discovery Conversations

Date	Name	Title / Organisation	Key points of discussion
24 Jan 2023	**Lisa Rea Currie**	Heritage Officer, EastSide Partnership	Collection Methods: Civic group work practice – using a dialogic approach, everyone who comes into the room is the expert. Encouraging people to find and tell their stories, even if they may not know where to begin. Hoping to target younger age groups as they are harder to reach – typically oral history and storytelling appeals to older people. Lisa shared a list of potential East Belfast based story collections for inclusion in audit – wide variety of activity across different organisations in this part of the city.
24 Jan 2023	**Olwen Purdue**	Professor of History, QUB	Olwen has experience of oral history work as a researcher, lecturer and project leader and is Director of the Centre for Public History at Queen's. Currently working on a new oral history project of everyday life in Belfast – working class life. Aims to reach a public audience via website and PRONI - interactive map where you can hear audio and layered with archive materials. What are some challenges that Belfast Stories might face? 'Disneyfying' - telling a solely positive story without enough real everyday life. (For example, there wasn't enough of everyday life & the hard reality of industrial Belfast in the original Titanic exhibit.) For Belfast Stories, the more diverse and nuanced the better. Certain narratives may dominate; it will be hard to ensure that people feel seen there. Olwen shared a list of potential academic sources (e.g. PhD research projects) to include in the audit.
3 Feb 2023	**Janice Smith**	Director, Smith & Kent Consulting	Janice has been consulting for Belfast Stories and with her colleague Brenda Kent convenes the Belfast Stories Equity Steering Group, which offers insights from groups that may be at risk of disadvantage or marginalisation. Janice shared a list of more than fifty potential story collections which have been gathered through her consulting and her work with the Equity Steering Group.

Date	Name	Title / Organisation	Key points of discussion
			Janice noted the following potential barriers to engagement and partnership working: - Physical barriers - availability of public transport, inclusive design, parking - Trust – people unsure if they are welcome to visit and contribute. People unsure if they will be able to tell their story and for it to be represented properly - Language - English may not be the language in which people feel comfortable telling their story - Roma community is not normally asked or represented
7 Feb 2023	**Sean O'Connell**	Professor of History, QUB	We discussed rights and permissions and the importance of informed consent for participants. Need for story contributors to feel part of the process. Barriers to access - especially for working class people who have contributed their stories if there is a cost to visit Belfast Stories. For oral history projects, sound quality can sometimes be an issue, for example many interviews have been recorded on tape with no intention to publish later - and have not been digitised / preserved / catalogued. The undergraduate 'Recording History' module at QUB – worked with BBC in the past to pitch radio documentaries, but in recent years has moved to podcasting instead of one-off shows. This module could potentially work with Belfast Stories on projects arising from student work. We discussed the possibility that students on the MA Public History course at QUB could intern with the Belfast Stories team to conduct oral histories with individuals who have been identified on themes that have been marked as particularly significant or where there are gaps in coverage in the collections. ***See also:*** case study on 'Making Ends Meet in the Past', Chapter 6.
20 Feb 2023	**Adam Murray**	Community Development Officer, Cara–Friend	The Cara-Friend Letters Archive includes more than 3,000 items (1.5K personal hand written correspondence) from members of LGBTQI+ community. Archive held at PRONI, but not publicly accessible.
	Becky Cruze	Public History Masters Intern, QUB/ Cara–Friend	Cara-Friend has developed a partnership with QUB to organise, then index the archive – all in spreadsheets based on personal data /thematic data. Becky is now looking for stories - finding writing in the collection that is reflective of society. Hoping to get funding to digitise the letters.

Date	Name	Title / Organisation	Key points of discussion
			Archive contains content that may trigger or cause distress. ***See also:*** Case study on Cara-Friend, Chapter 6
6 Mar 2023	**Janice Smith & Brenda Kent**	Directors, Smith & Kent Consulting	This was a discussion with the Belfast Stories Equity Steering Group. The group was set up to enable representation among traditionally underrepresented and marginalised communities in Belfast Stories and to address barriers to participation.
	Six members of the Equity Steering Group	People with lived experience as a disabled person, Autistic person, older person, and person from a minority ethnic background	Discussion around community archives – these often host rich content and many digital recordings, but record-keeping can be challenging and organisations have nowhere to host the results of their work. Discussion of various possibly interesting & relevant projects from different parts of the city with distinctive social histories, and groups doing interesting work including Ballynafeigh, East Belfast Historical Society, Donegall Road, shipyards, Belfast cemeteries, mills, sports clubs. Collective / community-based / place-based oral histories are important, but individual artistic approaches can also yield interesting stories such as Larry MacAree's exhibition and book. Belfast diaspora may be seen as a gap. Do people identify as being from or of Belfast? And does this matter? - *'People think Belfast Stories isn't for them. Belfast Stories might not be about me – I'm from Donegal. I'm a blow in.'* - *'I want to hear about people who are blow-ins – what brought you here?'* Discussion of people who feel they are in a liminal space and may not feel part of the conversation, for example due to refugee status. People may not want to be identified as an asylum seeker (either now or in the future); young people might not want to be identified as such. There may be issues around protecting identity. Young people with autism can feel very isolated and marginalised. Important to develop a space (and story collecting initiatives) that can offer a good welcome for people with disabilities.
9 Mar 2023	**Janet Hancock**	Deputy Head of Public Services, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)	PRONI holds both public records (e.g. official government documents and files) and private collections (which will likely be of more interest to Belfast Stories): - There are approximately 5,000 private collections deposited to date – which range widely in size, from a few pages to hundreds of boxes worth of material.

Date	Name	Title / Organisation	Key points of discussion
			- Key to engaging with PRONI is to work around the stories you want to tell. - Many collections are Belfast-specific or Belfast-centric but there are also many with a different or broader geographic focus. Partnership potential with PRONI in various ways - Depositing & preservation of collected stories: PRONI offers best practice professional archiving facilities and has a remit for both public and private collections; early discussion would be required to move this forward. - External / partnership projects have covered specific PRONI costs in some cases (e.g. funding for the Making the Future project covered costs of PRONI archivists to do research and engagement officers to develop public-facing programmes). - A more basic partnership would be to request archival content suggestions from PRONI - but staff resources are limited.
28 Mar 2023	**Máirtín Ó Muilleoir**	Belfast Media Group	Discussion of the *Andersonstown News* archive (50 years of local journalism). Belfast Media Group is co-operating with the social enterprise Tuairiscigh Béal Feirste/Report for Belfast to explore options for future sustainability including a possible move to becoming a social enterprise. There is the potential to 'gift [the archive] to the city'. The social enterprise will also seek to be a sustainable model for local journalism. Report for Belfast is considering opportunities for funding to create a digital archive of the 50 years of the newspaper. Discussion of different areas of the city and their own distinctive histories. Potential for Belfast Stories to tell some of the story of West Belfast and then visitors can call to West Belfast to find out more - a satellite.
4 Apr 2023	**Frank Dempsey**	Carrick Hill Community Association	- A close residential neighbourhood of the Belfast Stories site - Strong story collection methodology (although not formalised) involving intergenerational events and community activism. - Book: 'Green Peas and Barley O' – stories of the people - Newsletters: Carrick Hill newsletters – 1980s. All in hard copy. Stopped when Unity Flats were demolished. - Events – are they recorded? May require further resource to record and digitise. - ***See also:*** Case Study, Chapter 6.

Date	Name	Title / Organisation	Key points of discussion
6 Apr 2023	**Francis Jones**	Head of Archive, NI Screen	Northern Ireland Screen's Digital Film Archive currently consists of approx. 11,000 moving image media provided by various different rights holders incl. amateur holders (e.g. 1930s films by aristocratic families; amateur collections became more widespread later as film recording was democratised); newsreel footage; NI Tourist Board collection; selections from the UTV Archive (the most extensive and significant part of the DFA collection). • The UTV Archive spans from 1959 to the 2010s and contains 100,000+ physical items. It preserves and provides access to the analogue output of UTV, across news, entertainment, culture, sport etc. • Recently digitised selections from the UTV Archive include 800 cans of film from the 1960s (maybe 5-6 items per can) - political figures, visitors to NI, everyday life, cultural activities, industry and domestic life. • A recent videotape digitisation process of 6,500 items involved a mini-audit to select items. • Collection based on partnership between NI Screen (digitisation, archiving, selection), PRONI (long-term physical and digital preservation) and ITV (rights holder). The Digital Film Archive has a cataloguing subcommittee which deals with issues relating to cataloguing – including selection, editorial, use of language, representation etc. NI Screen have developed much experience with rights management. They have found that in most circumstances of non-commercial/non-exclusive use, people are happy for content to be reused. To date, NI Screen have tended to implement collection management systems based on the requirement of specific projects - so there is knowledge of various systems; no single system in operation above all others.
13 Apr 2023	**David Hyndman**	Director, NVTV	Discussion of history of Northern Visions and development of NVTV as a local broadcast station Discussion of challenges involved in maintaining the NVTV archive - constant need for new material leaves little time / resources to focus on archiving. Discussion of NVTV's role in promoting community arts in Belfast. Concerns over Belfast Stories taking away public resources that could be used to support underfunded arts initiatives.

Date	Name	Title / Organisation	Key points of discussion
			See also: Case study, 'Stories from a Community Media Archive', Chapter 6.

6.   Story Collection Case Studies

6.1 Stories of Survival: 'Making Ends Meet in the Past'

'Making Ends Meet in the Past' is an oral history research project exploring working class life in Belfast with a particular focus on the experience of poverty among a range of city residents. The research was carried out by Sean O'Connell, Professor of History at Queen's University Belfast, with grant support from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

The project was based on 30 oral history interviews recorded on tape. At the time the recordings were made in 2002, participants ranged in age from 40-99 and so the stories cover a wide time period, from the 1910s to the early 2000s. The interviews offer an exploration of how people shopped and budgeted, building a compelling picture of working-class life in Belfast from the early 20th Century onwards.

This collection raises several pertinent issues for Belfast Stories in terms of: (1) the presentation of audio recordings; (2) ethical issues relating to existing collections; (3) curatorial and representational aspects of collections.

6.1.1 Presentation of audio recordings

Oral history research projects such as this one often use audio recorded interviews. These usually take the form of unstructured or semi-structured interviews about pre-planned topics, conducted by an individual researcher with a participant or small group of participants, perhaps in the participant's own home or place of work.

There are several options for how Belfast Stories might present audio recorded stories:

A. *Use original audio recordings:* Audio recordings could be played back in their original form over loudspeakers or headphones or accessed through an AR interface or app, for example.

B. *Transcribe:* Audio recordings could be transcribed and presented as text on an exhibition panel, as installation text, or in some other text-based format.

C. *Re-enact:* Audio recordings could be re-enacted and re-recorded by an actor reading the lines in audio or video.

Regarding 'Making Ends Meet in the Past', Sean O'Connell noted his preference for the original recordings to be used (subject to permissions being granted) and this is also our recommendation whenever possible when an archive of audio recordings is available.

There are several reasons to prefer the use of original audio recordings:

- The original recordings will have an authentic feel, capturing nuance and tone in the story-teller's voice that might be missed in a written transcription or a re-enactment.

- Unique qualities can be conveyed in a participant's voice (such as their background, age, and various aspects of their personality and life experience) that go beyond the story itself. For example, one of the 'Making Ends Meet…' participants, Mrs Rafferty, was aged 99 at the time of the interview; she spoke in an accent which is no longer heard in present-day Belfast and used colloquial phrases which are no longer commonplace.

- Audio recordings often invoke a specific ambience or atmosphere. For example, we might hear the ticking of a clock, a boiling pot on the hob or the crackle of a fireplace in someone's home. Likewise, an outdoor recording conducted on a busy urban street will have a different feel than one in a park or suburban area.

- These elements can all add nuance and richness to the listener's experience of the story.

However, there are also significant challenges in the use of original audio recordings. It is important to remember that audio recordings of oral history interviews are not usually created with public exhibition in mind. In academic contexts, such recordings can be seen as raw materials for the researcher's use - the main purpose is to create a verbatim written transcript which the researcher can then analyse and discuss in a piece of scholarly writing. In community oral history projects, the imperative is often to record an individual's story before the chance is lost, or because it relates to a particular theme - again, public exhibition may not be considered as a potential output.

Oral history / story-telling recordings might therefore be made without thought to audio quality, long-term preservation or later re-use. The following issues should be considered in all cases but especially when recordings have not been produced to a professional standard:

- Poor audio quality: In many cases a recording may be unusable or may require significant audio treatment. This can occur for many reasons, especially if poor quality equipment has been used, or if the location is inappropriate (e.g. a very echoey room), or if care is not taken to record the speaker's voice clearly, or if the gain is set too high (resulting in an unpleasant distorting / clipping sound) or if there is overwhelming background noise or wind noise, or if there are technical problems with the recording device or microphones.
- Risk of loss: Recordings that are not carefully preserved are at a significant risk of loss, due to being misplaced, physically damaged or destroyed, or undergoing natural media deterioration. Original audio recordings should be stored securely and backed up to at least one additional location (e.g. copied to another device or saved in another format, and stored at a different site from the original).
- Expectation of subtitling / translation / transcription: In contemporary digital media and social media, the use of subtitles is now often an expected standard. For example, users of YouTube, Instagram and TikTok can expect to see computer-generated subtitles and

captions on practically all video content. If an audio recording used in Belfast Stories is of poor quality, or if the speaker's accent is hard to understand, many visitors will expect to have a written transcription and/or synchronous subtitles along with the audio.

- Mixed media preservation: Securely storing a wide variety of media content requires significant resources and an appropriate Collection Management System. ***See also*** *'Collection Management Systems' in the table titled 'Barriers to accessing collections and partnership working' in Chapter 8.*

6.1.2 Ethical considerations

Recordings from the 'Making Ends Meet…' collection were not originally intended to be made public. This leads to several significant ethical issues which are instructive for Belfast Stories.

- *Participant consent to use stories in a different context*. In the case of 'Making Ends Meet…' participants signed up more than 20 years ago to be part of an academic research project on their experience of money and poverty in the city. The potential use of this material in a public setting was not part of the original agreement, so Belfast Stories should consult further with the collection holder about reuse, bearing in mind that a new agreement with participants may be required. ***See also:*** 'Rights and Permissions' in the table titled 'Barriers to accessing collections and partnership working' in Chapter 8.
- *Recordings featuring deceased participants.* The rights situation for recordings featuring participants who have since died can be complicated - rights do not always automatically transfer to the researcher / commissioning organisation and may pass instead to the estate of the individual. Surviving family members are often very happy to allow reuse but it is important to proceed with caution and check on a case-by-case basis. ***See also:*** 'Rights and Permissions' in the table titled 'Barriers to accessing collections and partnership working' in Chapter 8.

- *Entry fees to Belfast Stories for those who have contributed.* The issue of payment for access to Belfast Stories should be carefully considered – especially for those who have contributed stories – or surviving family members in cases where the participant is deceased. Sean O'Connell noted that this issue is all the more pointed in projects like 'Making Ends Meet…', where participants have experienced poverty and discuss this experience as part of their story. ***See also:*** 'Ethical Considerations' in the table titled 'Barriers to accessing collections and partnership working' in Chapter 8.

6.1.3 Curatorial considerations

Given its wide-ranging time frame, and involvement of participants of various ages drawn from different parts of the city, 'Making Ends Meet…' is not a one-dimensional collection. Rather it is multi-faceted and features a range of perspectives and experiences. This gives rise to interesting representational challenges:

- *Terminology:* Cultural and political life in Belfast is known for highly specific terms, euphemisms and acronyms. For example, some older participants use the term 'the Troubles' to refer to the 1910s/1920s conflict in Belfast, rather than (or in addition to) the period from the late 1960s onwards. This highlights a potentially useful opportunity for contextual interpretation, by framing an individual's story in relation to their use of particular terminology or themes.
- *Everyday speech:* More broadly, a collection of stories gathered across a wide time range can introduce important terms and events through participants' everyday speech, which tends to be nuanced and complex, with highly specific slang and colloquialisms. It is likely that some participants will use language that may be considered sensitive, dated or problematic by contemporary standards. Again, framing and interpretation may be helpful in such cases, especially if the content of a story might be upsetting or distressing.

- *Reference to larger collections:* Depending on the curatorial / interpretive strategy used for Belfast Stories, it is likely that only some stories (or portions thereof) from any one collection will be selected for public display. However, by providing references to the collections from which stories are drawn, there is an opportunity to share and celebrate the work of researchers and collecting organisations and to encourage visitors to explore themes of interest more deeply, as well as fostering a sense of community and dialogue among collecting partners.

6.2 Stories of Friendship and Care: Cara-Friend Letter Archive

"How do we use these ethically in a way that's engaging?" Cara-Friend

Cara-Friend is a charitable organisation which supports and empowers the LGBTQI+ community in Northern Ireland. The organisation was established as a volunteer-led project almost 50 years ago, in 1974, pre-decriminalisation (1982). Cara-Friend first existed with a PO Box address and an open call out in newspapers for people to get in touch by letter. The results were astounding, opening much needed dialogue through handwritten correspondence. Although Cara-Friend is Belfast based, the collection includes correspondence from across Northern Ireland and beyond, as far as Argentina, Mauritius, New Zealand, and the United States. Handwritten correspondence continued until the mid 1990s when email became more popular. Now Cara-Friend conducts all correspondence online.

Given that the collection period began in a period when it was illegal to be gay in NI, Cara-Friend anonymised correspondence by removing names and applying codes. This was put to test when an RUC raid on the Cara-Friend office in Belfast produced no evidence that pointed to any individual. Logbooks and minutes of meetings have been maintained meticulously with the same level of protection by the original volunteers.

The collection comprises 3000+ personal letters and supporting materials 1974-1995. Personal letters are to and from Cara-Friend including letters from family members and health practitioners seeking support. It also includes telephone logbooks, company correspondence, annual reports, and books of newspaper clippings. Cara-Friend staff have mentioned how surprisingly narrative even the annual reports are: "they really put so much time into describing the queer community in NI".

6.2.1 Accessibility to the letters

The collection is housed at PRONI, but it is closed to public access. Cara-Friend describe it as 'one of the most popular, but least accessible' collections. It can only be accessed for academic purposes. Another issue for accessibility is that the collection has not been digitised.

A current partnership with Queen's University Belfast has connected Cara-Friend with a Public History MA Student intern. This role is undertaking an analysis of the collection, by sorting correspondence. This analysis will also begin to identify stories that run through the collection. It was never intended that the letters would be made public, so this analysis will never show the letters in their full form, rather it will pull out parts of the narrative. Common themes and quotes will then be drawn out of the letters. Cara-Friend are able to map and identify letters from the Belfast area if this is helpful to Belfast Stories.

Cara-Friend are keen to share these stories and they are brimming with ideas about how to share the story of the collections. Their ideas include immersive walk-through exhibitions, online exhibitions and programs, live interpretation/guided tours, events and programs, festivals and theatrical representations. The stories from the collection have already been used to inform a theatre production called *Callings* with Kabosh Theatre. Cara-Friend say that by sharing the collection further or in new ways, it will encourage more people to seek support or share their own story.

6.2.2 Untold Stories

The collection tells the incredible story of gay rights activism in Northern Ireland, featuring themes such as social unrest, loneliness, safety, belonging, religion and community. Given that the collection began pre-decriminalisation of homosexuality, the letters contain previously untold stories, but these stories are likely to include topics that may be triggering or distressing for some readers. There are questions about how the letters can be used ethically.

It is worth noting that there are other established and fledgling collections that may complement the Cara-Friend letters:

- UU and QUB are partnering on a new research project that seeks to uncover 'LGBTQI+ life from the early 20th century until the 1982 decriminalisation of homosexuality in NI.'
- PRONI holds the Jeffrey Dudgeon court case papers which record the case of Belfast politician and gay rights activist's successful 'Dudgeon vs the United Kingdom' case which he brought to the European Court of Human Rights to challenge criminalisation in Northern Ireland.
- Cara-Friend has partnered on a course called Pathways that engages young people from cities across Northern Ireland who are interested in animation and creative writing. Pathways is an immersive two-year training and mentoring programme designed specially for LGBTQI+ 16–26-year-olds interested in creating and publishing queer-inclusive children's books.

6.2.3 Ownership

Ownership of the letters remains with the author of each. Even though names have been removed from the letters, they still cannot be published in full due to other information shared in letters which may identify someone. For example, some letters may speak about where the person was from, or where they had travelled to, relationships, etc. If Belfast Stories wish to partner with Cara-Friend, it is envisaged that quotes may be pulled from some of the letters that speak to a wider thematic.

6.3 Stories from a Community Media Archive: NVTV

NVTV (Northern Visions TV) is a Belfast-based community television station broadcasting on a digital terrestrial licence. It broadcasts on Freeview and Virgin Media from 5pm each evening, with an extensive selection of material also presented online. Northern Visions, the not-for-profit organisation which runs the station, was formed in 1986. Its premises at 23 Donegall Street features TV studios, production spaces, offices, and the organisation's physical collection of moving image media. In addition to programme production and scheduling, Northern Visions offers training and workshops in film-making and community journalism.

Some of the themes the station has explored in its broadcast and archival materials in recent years include oral histories of Belfast Cathedral Quarter, economic regeneration through arts and culture, economic regeneration in different parts of the city, equality and diversity, the peace process, interfaces and reconciliation, housing, politics, health, experiences of young people, transport, cultural diversity and ethnic minorities. The NVTV archival project *Our Generation* focused on 1965 – 2013 and collected the reminiscences, experiences, insight and appraisal of those who, in a myriad of small ways, sought to build positive structures, resources and services in the community amid - and despite - challenging circumstances including ongoing conflict.

6.3.1 Archiving and cataloguing challenges

While some of the NVTV collection has been preserved and catalogued - allowing search and selection by station staff for broadcast and/or online special collections - the vast majority of the archive has *not* been preserved or catalogued. Original recordings and B-roll footage are stored in various physical media formats at the NVTV offices, including DV tape, DVDs and some older film formats such as the tapes used by the Sony Portapak system. These physical media are held on storage shelves, in boxes and filing cabinets. The small proportion of the collection that has been preserved (usually for the purpose of current programming or arising from a

particular funding opportunity) – has been digitised and transferred to a local server, and the original physical media are marked as archived.

There is a strong level of institutional knowledge within Northern Visions, such that different staff members may be aware of the variety of content held on original physical media, even if it has not yet been archived. However, this knowledge relies on staff members' personal experience of working with the collection and over any given period, many different people will work for or on behalf of the organisation. This frequent change of personnel makes finding the time and implementing a system for archiving older material more challenging, since regular programming and workshop activity must take priority. When a staff member moves on, their knowledge of particular archival items may be lost. During the busy regular programming cycle at NVTV, there is a risk that an item may be drawn from the physical archive for a particular purpose without being returned to its original location, leading to material loss. Such institutional knowledge, though invaluable, is not a substitute for a properly archived collection that has been well catalogued and preserved for the long term. While it may require time, resources and training to implement, a proper system of archiving and cataloguing would increase the value of NVTV's output and its potential to engage in a wider network.

For the funding bodies that support the work of NVTV and other arts–based / community organisations, archiving and preservation is not usually a priority. While funders such as the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the National Lottery Heritage Fund may offer resources to preserve significant items (see for example, 'Our Generation', which identified key items from the NVTV archive along several themes from the late 1960s to the late 2000s), such funding tends to be narrowly focused on preserving collections relating to a specific theme or community, and enveloped within broader outcomes based on community engagement and participation. This can restrict the amount of preservation work that smaller organisations can do – no matter how extensive and significant their collections and no matter how urgent the need for archiving to be completed.

NVTV is one of several small, independent organisations that hold collections. The challenge of archiving in this context presents a possible model of partnership and/or funding support that would be mutually beneficial for both Belfast Stories and such organisations. In the case of NVTV, this would allow for some or all of the following outcomes:

- enable the significant collection NVTV collection to be audited in full, with important items (such as those with historic significance or particular unique characteristics) identified, preserved and catalogued;
- enable a flexible and robust content search - based on keywords, dates, locations and names – as a result of proper cataloguing;
- create fully digitised, accessible and easily backed-up versions of physical media content, for easier and more flexible sharing within the organisation and for external partners.

As a rule, moving image media content is always more easily shared and reused when it has been properly preserved and catalogued and we strongly recommend a process of enabling preservation and cataloguing to be carried out where required and feasible. However, this should not preclude worthwhile stories that have not yet been preserved from being used in Belfast Stories; flexibility in the choice of Collection Management System for the project should allow stories that have not yet been fully catalogued to be selected for use.

6.3.2 Rights and permissions

For Northern Visions, being clear about the ownership of content and gaining participant consent has been an important part of their work from the beginning. The organisation has sought to ensure they have robust agreements with contributors allowing a wide range of uses, to enable them to produce programmes and reuse content without restriction. Effectively,

Northern Visions own the rights to everything they produce, including content filmed by participants in community film-making workshops.

When they receive requests for reuse of material, Northern Visions are often happy to share content without charge (in part due to the complication of charging for this service). However, this is subject to agreement that the intended reuse aligns with NVTV's own aims and ethos. By the same token, Northern Visions generally reserve the right *not* to share material if they feel the planned reuse would conflict with their approach, or if there seemed to be an unwarranted commercialisation of their community-based material.

This context presents a slightly different challenge compared to the participant consent issue noted previously in the case study 'Making Ends Meet in the Past'. Since Northern Visions already own the rights to all material and can allow reuse of the content, it means that Belfast Stories can negotiate directly with the organisation without having to consider new participant agreements for reuse. In this case, fostering a partnership with Northern Visions would allow access to a wide variety of moving image footage and interviews for a wide range of participants. However, this also means that Belfast Stories should carefully consider what it intends to use and how to benefit Northern Visions in return - for example, through some kind of partnership and/or funding support.

6.3.3 Engagement with the arts and heritage sector

Through its independent and community-focused programming, NVTV has developed an important position as a promoter of the arts and heritage in Belfast, especially community arts. In our conversations with NVTV as part of this audit, the station's interest in developing community arts came through time and again.

At a fundamental level, arts and heritage organisations should be seen as key stakeholders in Belfast Stories since – alongside community and voluntary sector organisations, and often in collaboration with them – their storytelling and oral history projects will likely make up a large part of the source material for the new venue. Beyond seeing these organisations as content providers, however, NVTV leadership expressed the hope that Belfast Stories could be a site of engagement with local independent arts and heritage organisations. The expertise in arts practice and management which has been developed in these organisations over many years could be put to powerful use in programming and activating Belfast Stories as a public space.

This suggests a curatorial strategy for Belfast Stories that can present compelling narratives of life in Belfast from multiple sources, while maintaining a platform for new interpretations, spatial activations and creative engagement from the city's vibrant arts and heritage organisations.

6.4 Stories of Change in an Inner City Community: Carrick Hill

"When they took away the old Carrick Hill, they took the heart away. Broke the community with the flats. It was a disaster." Carrick Hill Community Association

Overview

Carrick Hill is an inner-city neighbourhood bounded by the Westlink, Clifton Street and Peters Hill. Residents of Carrick Hill are near neighbours of Belfast Stories. Carrick Hill residents include notable sportspeople from bare knuckle fighters to jockeys to a current world champion in Irish Dancing.

Carrick Hill Community Association is a community led charity that supports the local community. Carrick Hill Community Association (CHCA) has led many initiatives to celebrate and share stories of the history of the area. An established community organisation, CHCA has been instrumental to the physical regeneration and integral to the keeping the beating heart of this historic neighbourhood. Their commitment to placemaking, memory and bringing history to life demonstrates a unique form of storytelling.

6.4.1 Community Storytelling

Collections include formal and informal methods to collect and disseminate stories:

Newsletters

These include a newsletter published throughout the 1980s, with a particular focus on improving living conditions in the Unity Flats (and eventually a campaign for their demolition). Newsletters include first hand stories from locals and they cover themes like housing, education, social justice, human rights, religion, segregation. The newsletters exist in hard copy within CHCA and have not been digitised.

Interviews

A local publication '*Green Peas and Barley O'* was the result of interviews with local residents. The book title is based on a children's street song. Interviews collected memories and stories and there is a collection of 45 audio tapes of the recordings. These recordings have not been digitised. They could be revisited for a partnership project with Belfast Stories.

Events

CHCA host intergenerational storytelling events to celebrate or commemorate. A recent event [when] explored stories about a local football team, Alton United, who played and won in the FAI Cup Final in Dalymount Park in Dublin with a single goal in 1923. Sadly the cup never made it across the border to Belfast. The event saw around 80 people gathering to listen to families' accounts of the story. Valuable events like this could be recorded, if they were given the proper resourcing.

6.4.2 Location

Carrick Hill is less than 0.5 of a mile away from the Belfast Stories site, although the design of the new houses, built to replace the Unity Flats, face in such a way that the neighbourhood looks inward. This is typical of planning that leads to segregation. In addition, The Westlink clearly segregates Carrick Hill further from the City Centre. Carrick Hill is not alone in this regard, and it would be a good exercise to map all residential areas in proximity. If a programme was piloted with Carrick Hill residents, this model of learning could be tailored to other parts of the city.

6.4.3 Archiving

Although the Carrick Hill collections have been developed with a grass roots approach, The story of Carrick Hill also exists within other formalised collections such as Digital Film Archive

and BBC Rewind (see for example a 1964 UTV news item on slum clearances in Carrick Hill, hosted by the Digital Film Archive: https://digitalfilmarchive.net/media/slum-clearance-in-carrick-hill-3811).

There are questions around how these formal and informal archives might complement each other, as both have great value. It is clear that CHCA plays an integral part in the trusted collection process at a community level. This process, based on local social connections and community and neighbourhood bonds could not be replicated by Belfast City Council or other agencies or institutions.

How can Belfast City Council support this process? There is the potential to support community-led approaches by developing grant schemes or facilitating community skill-sharing workshops or training to help digitise and archive smaller scale collections. Small organisations often do not have the resources to implement high quality archiving practice – providing access to such skills, either through project funding or training initiatives, could foster the development of storytelling practice and enable digital skills development.

7.   Collection Audit Tool

This story collection audit is the first of its kind for Belfast. Central to the audit was the use of a Collection Audit Tool, which allowed us to gather a wide range of information on specific story collections and their holders. Already in this first iteration, the audit has collected information on a large number of projects (detailed in Chapter 8), offering a clear impression of the kinds of story collections that have been produced to date and providing a strong basis for continuing research as Belfast Stories develops.

Desk research was our primary tool in completing this audit. With the exception of information collected through discovery conversations, the audit uses information in the public domain (for example in oral history publications, project and organisation websites and archival catalogue descriptions). It should be noted that the reliability and quality of information available in the public domain varies quite widely. This is to be expected given the diversity of collection holders – from small not-for-profit community organisations to major broadcasting institutions. We have noted the date of our research on each entry in the audit, allowing future iterations to retrace the data we have collected.

Auditing Fields

The Collection Audit Tool was built upon the previous Story Collection Framework commissioned from Lord Cultural Resources by Belfast City Council. As shown in **Table 1**, the Collection Audit Tool provided a template to gather relevant information about existing collections, and new fields created for this audit allowed us to capture additional project-specific data such as location, sector, and content tags.

Table 1: Fields used to gather information on collections using the Collection Audit Tool.

AUDITING FIELD	DESCRIPTION / USE
PROJECT / COLLECTION TITLE	If a specific/discrete project exists, name it here. Ideally complete a separate form for each project within a single organisation.
ORGANISATION / INSTITUTION	Host organisation of a specific story collection - some organisations will have multiple collections. Ideally complete a separate form for each project.
ORGANISATION / INSTITUTION VISION AND MISSION	If relevant.
SECTOR OF THE ORGANISATION	- Educational Institutions - Funders / Trusts - Private Collections - Community / Voluntary Sector - Religious Institutions - Broadcast / Media - Oral History Networks - Museums - Libraries / Archives - Government / Public Sector - Culture/ Arts / Heritage - Sport
POSTCODE OF THE ORGANISATION	Note: Record postcode of specific project separately, if there is one.
CONTACT NAME	If there is a contact within the organisation / project.
ROLE OF THE CONTACT PERSON	If relevant.
WEBSITE OF THE PROJECT / COLLECTION	If relevant.
SOCIAL MEDIA: FACEBOOK	If relevant.
SOCIAL MEDIA: INSTAGRAM	If relevant.
SOCIAL MEDIA: TWITTER	If relevant.
SOCIAL MEDIA: YOUTUBE	If relevant.
SOCIAL MEDIA: TIKTOK	If relevant.

AUDITING FIELD	DESCRIPTION / USE
SOCIAL MEDIA: OTHER	If relevant.
SUBJECT MATTER	Identifies the subject matter(s) of the collection.
EXTENT OF THE COLLECTION	Where known - e.g. 50 audio recordings / 100 videos / 20 written interviews...
POSTCODE OF THE PROJECT	If relevant.
FIRST PERSON NARRATIVES?	How much of the collection is based on first person narratives? All / Some / None / n/a
COLLECTING INITIATIVE DATES	Start and end date as applicable.
COLLECTION OVERVIEW	Brief overview of the collection.
COLLECTION TYPE	Oral Histories / Intangible Heritage / Moving Images / Still Images / Born Digital / Object Based / Installations / Books / Other / n/a
COLLECTION FORMATS / MEDIUMS	Audio / Video / Film and footage / Written content / Published material (newspapers, books) / Digitally created content / Map and plan / Photograph / Paper based material / Prints and drawings / 2D, other / 3D / Digitized copies / Other
CONTENT TAGS	Add 3 or more tags separated by commas. (Tag examples: women, industry, shipbuilding, sport, green spaces, theatre, politics, church, architecture...)
THEME: I am HOME (Theme 1 of 6)	- This theme is relevant to the collection. - This theme is not relevant to the collection. - It is unclear if this theme is relevant or n/a.
THEME: I am RESILIENT (Theme 2 of 6)	- This theme is relevant to the collection. - This theme is not relevant to the collection. - It is unclear if this theme is relevant or n/a.
THEME: I am PLACE (Theme 3 of 6)	- This theme is relevant to the collection. - This theme is not relevant to the collection. - It is unclear if this theme is relevant or n/a.
THEME: I am INNOVATIVE (Theme 4 of 6)	- This theme is relevant to the collection. - This theme is not relevant to the collection. - It is unclear if this theme is relevant or n/a.

AUDITING FIELD	DESCRIPTION / USE
THEME: I am CHANGE (Theme 5 of 6)	- This theme is relevant to the collection. - This theme is not relevant to the collection. - It is unclear if this theme is relevant or n/a.
THEME: I am CREATIVE (Theme 6 of 6)	- This theme is relevant to the collection. - This theme is not relevant to the collection. - It is unclear if this theme is relevant or n/a.
COLLECTION SOURCES	This identifies the various potential sources that may be considered/approached for the purpose of collecting. Sources depend very much on the type(s) and format(s) of assets that one seeks to collect. Sources may include cultural organizations, individuals, artists and creatives etc.
COLLECTING METHODS	Determines the preferred collecting methods.
CHRONOLOGICAL SCOPE	- Exploring the past % - Living now % - Creating the future %
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE	- Belfast City - Greater Belfast - Belfast natives living abroad - Immigrant and transient to Belfast - Tourists/Visitors to Belfast - Northern Ireland - UK - Ireland - Rest of Europe and the world
AUDIENCES	Notes key target audiences that the organization seeks to reach.
COLLECTION USE & RE-USE BY INSTITUTION	- Exhibitions - Online exhibitions and programs - Live interpretation/guided tours - Guided and walking tours – off site - Virtual tours, online programs and/or events - Events and programs - Talks and lectures - Screening - Festivals - Documentaries - Book publications - Theatrical representations - Commissions - Residencies - Digital creations

Appendix 5: Stories Audit

AUDITING FIELD	DESCRIPTION / USE
	- Creative workshops - Educational material & Outreach - Educational Training, Professional Development and/or mentoring - Websites - Social medias - Podcasts - Apps - Newsletters - Blogs - Other
PUBLIC ACCESS	Identifies the level of access to the collection, that is, the ability for other organizations and the public to locate, consult, copy, user and reuse collections, whether physically or digitally.
PARTNERSHIPS	Identifies partners involved in collecting initiatives.
RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE	Identifies main expertise available within the organization, along with resources.
PRESERVATION	Outlines preservation mandate and activities.
CURATION AND MEDIATION	Identifies aspects of curation and mediation.
OWNERSHIP & RIGHTS MANAGEMENT	Identifies who owns collections and how rights are managed.
ETHICS	Identifies specific ethical issues.
BARRIERS TO USE / ACCESS	Identifies specific barriers that relate to use of or access to the collection.
ANY OTHER INFORMATION	If relevant
THIS INFORMATION WAS GATHERED BY	Add name of person / organisation carrying out the research
WHEN INFORMATION WAS GATHERED	Add date to aid with future research
INFORMATION SOURCES	- Interview with project custodian - Research (e.g. online / books / primary sources relating to the collection) - Word of mouth (e.g. project mentioned by someone at a meeting) - Other:

Catalogue of Story Collections

Using the Collection Audit Tool, we have produced a *Catalogue of Belfast Story Collections*, provided as a searchable spreadsheet to accompany this report. This is a live working document which can be developed further over the coming years: the catalogue can be filtered and searched to identify items of interest during the curation phase, and new story collections or projects can be added to it using the auditing fields as described in **Table 1** on the previous pages. The Catalogue can be used by BCC or external providers to search and filter story collections according to various needs (e.g. location, sector, thematic tags).

The audit has captured 100 story collections / projects, which are listed on the following pages.

1932 Shared Heritage

9ft in Common

A Century Later

A Historical Exhibition of Progressive Loyalism

A Sense of Place: North Belfast Care Zone

Andersonstown News Archive

Ballymac Mobile Museum

Ballynafeigh Oral History Project

BBC Rewind

Bealach na hAislinge / Dreamways

Belfast accent (British Library)

Belfast Celtic Museum

Belfast City Cemetery app and guide

Belfast in the 1930's: An Oral History Project

Belfast Sound Map

Belfast Transport Hub Arts and Heritage Strategy

Betjeman's Belfast

Big Hand for the Band

Blackstaff Mill – Baroness May Blood MBE

Blackstaff Residents Association

British civilian nurse, RVH, 1958-1988

Buried in Belfast

BYstanding - The Choices We Made

Cara-Friend Letter Archive

Carrick Hill Community Association

Century of Change Exhibition

Chinese Welfare Association

Community Consultation for Quality Of Life

Creative Writing and Quilt Making Project

Dear Diary

Disabled People Speak Out

Divided Society - Northern Ireland 1990 – 1998

Donegall Pass Community Forum

East Side Lives

Ensemble Colours: A Spectrum of Stories

extraORDINARYwomen

Family Signed Stories

Folklife Collection

Fr Des Wilson Archives

Gastronomy Summit 2022

Glór Podcast

Great War Gaeilgeoirí of East Belfast

Healing Through Remembering Network

Herstory - Peace Heroines

History of Cinema in Northern Ireland

Homeless Connect / Homeless Awareness Week

The Houben Centre

Indian Heritage in Northern Ireland

The Infinite City Podcast

Irish Trade Unions - Industrial Relations in NI

James Connolly Archive

Kabosh Theatre Projects

Lá/ Lá Nua Irish Language Newspaper

The Lamplighters

The Library Men of WW1

The Listening Project

Living Legacies 1914-18

Living Library

Living through the conflict: Belfast oral histories

Loyalism, Memory & Change

Making Ends Meet in the Past

Making the Future - Oral Archive

Matilda Street

Museum of Orange Heritage

My Belfast – Stories in Sound

North Belfast Women: Living In An Interface Area

Northern Ireland Deaf Sports

NVTV Special Collections

Oral History: Former H&W Employees

Reflected Lives

Our Generation (NVTV)

Poverty, Ethnicity And International Migrants

Prisons Memory Archive

Queer History NI

R-CITY Summer Camp Showcase

Reflected Lives: Peace Wall Communities

Reminiscence Network NI - Life in a Box

Stories from Silence / WAVE Stories

Sharing Memories Building Communities

Sharing Stories

Sign of Our Times

Signed Stories

St Comgall's Visitor Centre

St Matthews Church History

Still Livin' - Larry MacAree

Story of Belfast exhibition

Storytelling Audio - Tullycarnet Yarnspinners

Strand Stories

Telling Our Stories

Templemore Baths Research Project

tenx9 Podcast & Videos

This is Me - Cornstore Youth Club, Draperstown

This is Me - Belonging

This is Me - Junction Club

Unlocking Our Sound Heritage

UPstanding - Stories of Courage

UTV Archive

The Vacuum Newspaper

VMR: Voices of Migration and Return

WheelWorks

Write Up Your Street Zine

You don't know where these people are now,
and where their stories end.

Adam Murray, on the people who wrote letters
seeking support from Cara-Friend.

8.   Analysis of Findings

8.1 Collections by Sector

The initial sector mapping focused on the following sectors (bearing in mind that some organisations may straddle more than one): Educational Institutions, Funders / Trusts, Private Collections, Community / Voluntary Sector, Religious Institutions, Broadcast Media, Oral History Networks, Museums, Libraries / Archives, Government / Public Sector, Culture/ Arts / Heritage, Sport.

As shown in **Figure 2** below, the majority of collections are held by organisations in the community / voluntary sector, with 38 collections – this is to be expected, since oral history projects are common within this sector. The next largest group was made up of organisations in culture / arts / heritage, consisting of 18 collections – again, this is not surprising due to the extensive story collection work done by arts and heritage organisations, often in collaboration with community / voluntary sector partners.

Clear gaps have also emerged, with low representation of private collections, religious institutions and sporting organisations. There may be several reasons for this:

- *Rights / permissions for reuse:* There may be many significant collections which have yet to be made public because the collection holder does not have the right to publish them – or it is unclear who owns the original material;
- *Sensitive content:* Some of our interviewees for this audit noted that certain collections contain sensitive or challenging material which participants and/or collection holders are unwilling (as yet) to share publicly;
- *Fewer story collection initiatives:* We can surmise that certain sectors may have less experience in story collection, perhaps because oral history is not commonly used in

their area of work. In such cases, under-represented sectors could be encouraged to become involved in new sector-wide story collection initiatives.

It is important to note that there are several major organisations in Broadcast / Media, Libraries / Archives, and Museums which are only partially represented in this audit. Each of these undoubtedly holds a large amount of oral history / storytelling content of interest to Belfast Stories. However, it is possible that some of their archives have not yet been organised as publicly accessible collections, or there may be issues around rights and reproduction / reuse of copyrighted material. Further engagement with organisations in those fields should yield an extensive range of additional content.

Legend:
- Community / Voluntary Sector - 38
- Culture / Arts / Heritage - 19
- Libraries / Archives - 11
- Educational Institutions - 10
- Broadcast / Media - 7
- Museums - 6
- Government / Public Sector - 4
- Religious Institutions - 2
- Private Collections - 2
- Sport - 1
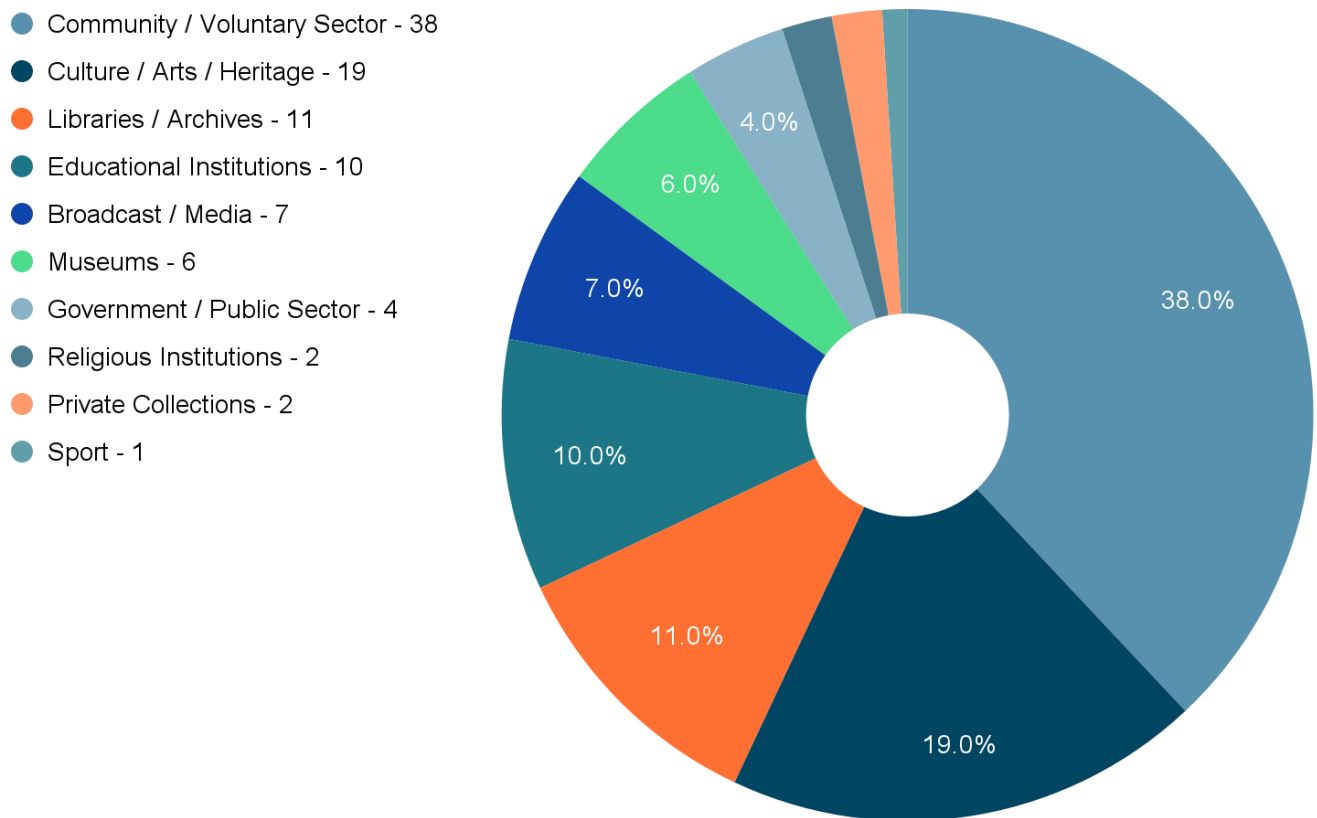
Figure 2: Chart showing sectoral breakdown of 100 collections audited.

8.2 Themes

The audit reflected six of the seven top-level guiding themes identified in earlier research: 'I am Home' / 'I am Resilient' / 'I am Place' / 'I am Innovative' / 'I am Change' / 'I am Creative'. A seventh theme, 'I am Authentic' has not been included, since this theme is already relevant to all collections. Numbers shown in **Figure 3** below are measured against all 100 audited collections.
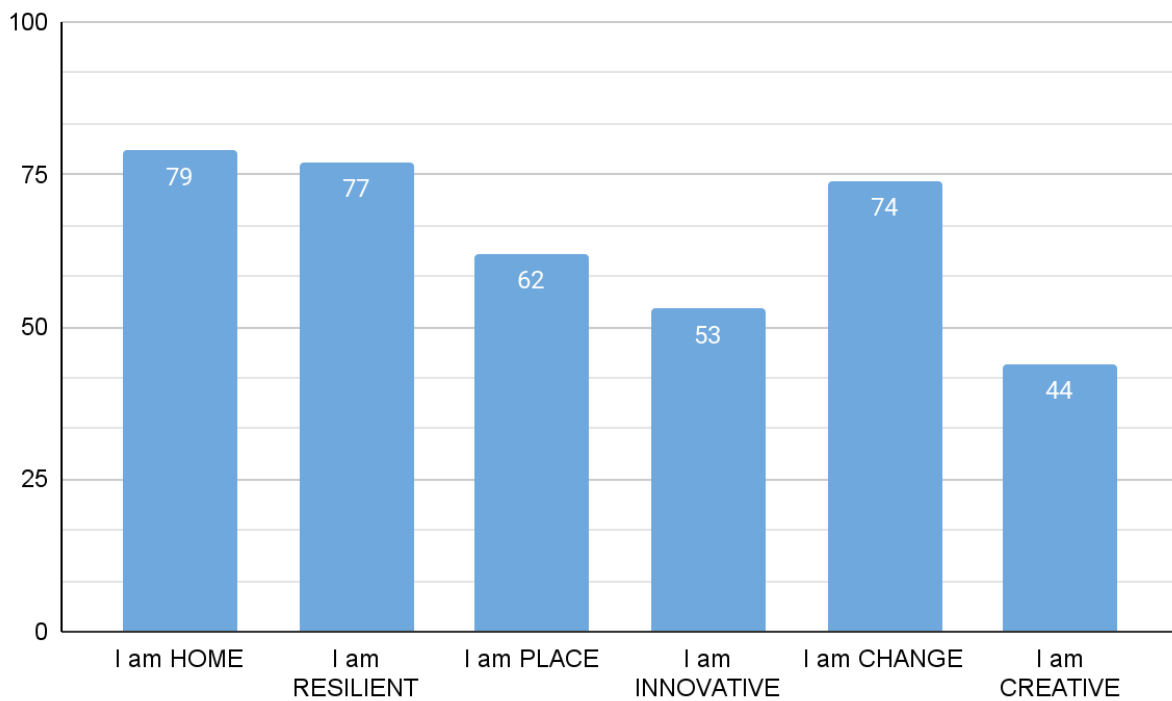
Figure 3: Chart showing breakdown of themes in the 100 collections audited.

These results are preliminary – a thorough review of all content in every audited collection to confirm the prevalence of each theme was outside the scope of this audit. However, our desk research shows a relative balance across all six themes, with 'I am Home', 'I am Resilient', 'I am Place' and 'I am Change' all prevalent. This suggests that these themes resonate with a wide variety of the stories collected in previous initiatives and perhaps highlight 'I am Creative' and 'I am Innovative' as areas of focus in future story collecting.

8.3 Content Tags

As part of the audit, we allocated several content tags to each collection: an intuitive description based on our desk research which can be found in the Catalogue of Story Collections. The resulting list of content tags (see **Figure 4**) indicates the prevalence of particular subjects within the 100 audited collections. The larger words in the list appeared more frequently in the content tagging exercise, while the smallest tags appeared only once.

The list of content tags clearly identifies the more common and general tags that are relevant to several collections - such as 'community', 'disability', 'the troubles', 'family', 'politics' and 'women'. But the list also reveals more specific tags that appear less frequently. Take, for example 'equality' and 'ethnicity', each represented twice. There are several similar tags with subtle distinctions that could help guide a story discovery process, as for example the cluster of tags on 'homes', 'homelessness', 'hostel' and 'housing'. These terms are all related to one another but each one suggests different types of stories.

The content tags should be seen as partial: they can act only as an initial, short-hand guide to richly detailed story collections that feature multiple voices, perspectives and memories. What is more, they should not be seen as a final guide to story collections in the city since more stories will always be uncovered in existing collections or will be collected in future initiatives. Nonetheless, they already demonstrate the variety of content held in collections, giving a sense of the kinds of stories that have been collected to date. The less prominent content tags (and indeed the tags that are entirely absent from this analysis) suggest areas for future research when considering under-represented stories and collections.

accents (1) access (1) activism (1) age (4) alleyways (1) anti-semitism (1) antrim road (1) architecture (2) art (6)
arts and crafts (1) aspirations (1) atmospheric (1) audio (1) belfast (9) belonging (1) blind (1) board of guardians (1)
bomb alerts (1) british heritage (1) built environment (3) business (1) care (1) castlecourt (1) celtic park (1)
centenaries (1) childhood (6) church (2) cinema (1) city hospital (1) civil rights (1) class (2)
climate change (1) colour (2) community development (1) community engagement (2) community group (1)
community relations (1) community (12) conflict resolution (1) conflict (4) control (1)
craft (1) crisis (1) cross-community (3) culture (2) custom house (1) daily regime (1) deaf (1)
dementia (1) design (1) dialect (2) disability rights (1) disability (8) discrimination (1)
district (3) diversity (1) domestic life (1) draperstown (1) drawing offices (1) east belfast (1) economic mobility (1)
education (4) enlistment (1) entertainment (1) ephemeral (1) epidemics (1) equality (2) ethnicity (2)
everyday life (1) faith (1) family (13) feminism (2) film (1) food (1) friendship (1) future (1)
gender (3) geography (1) grief (1) healing (1) health (4) heritage buildings (1) heritage (2)
history (7) home (2) homelessness (2) hopes (1) hostel (1) housing (3) inclusivity (1)
india (1) industry (1) inner city (1) interface areas (1) interface (1) intergenerational (2) internment (1)
jewish community (2) journalism (1) landmark (2) language (1) leisure time (1) lgbtq (1) libraries (1)
life experiences (1) local history (1) local stories (1) loss (1) love (1) loyalism (2) lurgan (1) marginalisation (1)
memory (4) migration (8) mixed marriages (1) movement (1) music (3)
musicians (1) nature (1) neighbourhood (1) networking (1) news (1) north belfast (2) northern ireland (2)
old museum building (1) otto jaffe (1) outings (1) pain (1) peace process (3) peace walls (1) personal history (1)
personal philosophy (1) politics (13) poverty (3) preservation (1) prison experience (1)
prison officers (1) prisoners (1) progressive loyalism (1) protest (1) public art (1) public space (3) r-city (1) race (1)
racism (1) redevelopment (1) regeneration (3) relationships (2) religion (4)
religious societies (1) republicanism (1) rights (1) ring of steel (1) royal victoria hospital (1) rural life (1) sanitation (1) school (1)
sexuality (1) shared heritage (1) shared housing (1) shipbuilding (1) shipyard (3) slum clearance (1) social isolation (1)
social issues (1) social mobility (1) socialism (1) society (2) sound art (1) sound (1) soundscape (1) sport (6) street (1)
summer camp (1) support (1) synagogue (1) technology (1) the troubles (9) theatre (1)
tradition (2) transformation (1) transport (1) travel (1) unemployment (1) unions (1) urban culture (1) urban history (2)
urban planning (2) urban sound (1) violence (1) volunteering (1) war (1) women's rights (1) women (9)
wonder (1) work (7) working life (1) world wars (3) writers (1) young people (4)

Figure 4: These content tags highlight the range of content found in story collections.

Lockdown hit... our neighbourhood connected... Random faces became actual names, actual connections, things in common.... chances to meet, and we held an alleyway pot luck between two streets... bins and crap collected, replaced with tables, chairs, lights... craic flooded the space for an evening. 3am arrived pretty fast!

Belfast resident sharing how the alleyway became a much needed shared space during Covid lockdown.

9. Barriers and recommendations to accessing collections and partnership working

Topic	Potential Barriers	Recommendations
1. Resource availability	Many community and academic projects identified in the audit were created with a limited life span and funding allocation. As a result, preparing collected materials for public use was not considered and will likely require additional resource.	Consider options for a city wide digitisation process with appropriate resources for projects and organisations that have relevant collections. Ensure that the curatorial / interpretation brief considers collections that are not yet digitised.
	PRONI should be seen as a key resource for Belfast Stories since it holds both general archival resources on the city's history and numerous first-person stories across thousands of private collections. PRONI staff have indicated support for Belfast Stories but they have also noted that their capacity to support the project is limited without additional resources.	Consider allocating resources to enable a programme of archival research at PRONI – to include both general interpretive background research on the city's history and specific story research within the private collections.
2. Rights and permissions	Some story collections will have been recorded for a specific purpose which limits the collection being made public. (In many cases consent may have been granted for a specific, limited purpose; for some collections, consent may not have been explicitly considered at all.) In many cases stories were collected simply because the opportunity existed to do so, or because limited opportunities for such collections emerge. As a result there can be a lack of clarity around eventual use of stories or collections. Individual participants in collections can often be hard to track down. Some participants may be reluctant to sign a new agreement.	For existing collections: - Engage with collection holders to clarify the rights status of their collections if this is not already clear. - Consult with copyright and data protection specialists to develop a Rights Clearance Strategy. - Negotiate new rights / permissions to use material in Belfast Stories when required (with the caveat that this can be a challenging task, especially with older collections). - Consider negotiating new terms of reference for collections that allow for re-use. - If rights cannot be negotiated, consider using parts of the collection that maintain anonymity and can be re-used under fair use / 'exceptions to copyright' legislation (however, it is important to consult with copyright specialists to ensure that this is done

Topic	Potential Barriers	Recommendations
		appropriately, and to outline a clear approach to fair use / exceptions to copyright in the Rights Clearance Strategy). For new collecting initiatives: - Create new commissions for story collecting with partners. - Consider community and sectoral training opportunities around rights management for story collections. - Consult with copyright specialists to develop robust and future-proofed rights management for new content. This should complement the approach to existing content in the Rights Clearance Strategy. - Ensure robust administration of participant paperwork, bearing in mind data protection legislation and duty of care to participants.
3. Duplication of content	When a story is already in the public realm (for example in an archival collection, museum exhibition, a book or a website) there is a risk of duplicating the existing offering. There is a risk that collection holders will perceive the use of their collections as unwanted competition for their services / attractions in other parts of the city.	Create unique values for Belfast Stories that prevent duplication. Where possible, engage with collection holders on the use of stories and encourage a sense of co-ownership among contributors. Ensure that previously published stories are curated / interpreted with care and sensitivity to their origin. Where possible, the curatorial approach should complement the original context and enable a new understanding of the story, rather than simply duplicating it. All content presented in Belfast Stories should be appropriately credited and referenced. Belfast Stories should offer public acknowledgement of the wide variety of ongoing work in story-telling and oral history collection in the city and foster a sense of inclusivity and engagement.

Topic	Potential Barriers	Recommendations
4. Ethical considerations	Potential partners have indicated that there may be stories that should be free for people to access as a matter of principle; placing such stories into a visitor attraction that charges for access would exclude some audiences. (In particular this was raised when discussing working class stories, or when audiences might have difficulty accessing/ or be prohibited from accessing their family's audiences.)	Consider opportunities to participate in Belfast Stories that are free of charge. Some potential solutions that could be explored further: - Creating free 'zones' of the building that reflect the generosity of storytelling; - Occasional free access days for Belfast residents / specific target audiences; - Events / space animations that can attract visitors without obligation to pay for access to the main attractions.
	Some collections identified by our study participants have been excluded from the audit as they contain very personal or distressing content. Collectors of such stories have indicated that story owners would not want them to be made public, for example, research that contains interviews with joyriders, or survivors of abuse	Belfast Stories will need to develop a strong case for including these stories and then find a way to engage with the story owners
5. Addressing gaps	The audit analysis has identified sectors that are not well represented within the audit (eg. Private Collections, Religious Institutions and Sport). Our engagement has indicated that stories of younger people are underrepresented within existing collections.	Belfast Stories could initiate new partnerships with the sectors identified in order to: 1. Ensure that existing collections from underrepresented sectors are included within future audit phases 2. Explore potential for new collections
6. Archiving	Many community collections have not been archived. Many exist on individual laptops or in hard copy and many have not been digitised. This creates a risk of material loss if older physical media are not digitised or preserved.	Allocate resource for a city wide archival and digitisation process. This could include small scale grants and/or training workshops for community organisations to enable them to identify and preserve important collections that they hold. For Belfast Stories itself, a long-term preservation strategy for all content is essential. This will likely require partnership with an archival institution that has facilities for proper preservation, such as PRONI.

Topic	Potential Barriers	Recommendations
7. Collection Management Systems	Collection Management Systems are used in archival and media organisations to ensure consistency of records and ease of access for future reference. Story collection holders that use such systems tend to be larger-scale organisations - for example libraries, archives, and media organisations. Often they will be custom-built to meet specific project needs and developed over time.	Consult with archival and records management specialists to develop a Collection Management Strategy and identify an appropriate Collection Management System for Belfast Stories.
	Collection Management Systems are based on a core set of metadata that give standardised information about each specific item in the collection. (Some examples of metadata fields include Title, Description, Date, etc.) If platforms follow the same protocols (such as the 'Dublin Core' standard for archival records) then metadata associated with collections can be shared relatively easily. However, it is important to recognise that most existing story collections have not been catalogued to any pre-existing protocol or standard, nor would it be feasible to complete such work for every collection, except perhaps for a selection of items.	Ensure flexibility as part of the specification for the Belfast Stories Collection Management System, to allow for the inclusion of stories and collections that have not been catalogued to a specific protocol or standard.
	Content featured in Belfast Stories will likely be based on a wide variety of mixed media content. This will require a robust and secure solution for data storage and access which can interact with the Collection Management System and/or a Collection Management System that can handle mixed media.	Consult with IT and collection management specialists to ensure an appropriate, secure and accessible data storage solution is selected for Belfast Stories. As a minimum, the data storage solution will need to securely store content and allow for on-demand access. This should be suitable for a wide variety of media in various formats, including text, images, audio, video and potentially newer forms of AR and VR content.

I think of when my mummy used to sit and say to me, "See when I was a wee girl…" Now I'm being the same [laughs]. See when I was a wee girl…

A woman remembers her mother telling her stories of growing up in Belfast.

10. Roadmap for ongoing story collection partnership programmes

The roadmap for ongoing story collection partnership programmes is based on a Theory of Change and a Logic Model. This methodology is a visual tool that demonstrates how actions (Activities) lead to the desired change (Outcomes).

Planning		Delivery		
Resources	**Activities**	**Outputs: Deliverables**	**Outcomes: The Result**	**Impact Overview**
Public investment Stakeholders / Partners Research / Knowledge Board/ Staff / Volunteers	Engagement with collection owners and interviewees Small grants / training on identifying / preserving collections Co-creation with partners, e.g. QUB oral history students Consider resourcing key archival partners e.g. PRONI Celebrate the wealth of story collections and the tradition of storytelling Pilot study sharing stories uncovered via social media outreach, creating transparency Further audit, taking into account the sectors currently underrepresented Further research on ethics/ barriers with partners Research best practice for collecting	Establish a programme of outreach with potential collection holders Training and knowledge sharing on archiving and preservation of existing collections Commision new story collections with partners to address gaps identified Disseminate thought leadership that explores the challenges of sharing story collections through a conference Develop an ethical framework for story collecting	Collection holders will feel informed and engaged Collection holders will have new skills to manage their own collections Trust established between Belfast Stories, collection holders and broader communities Potential audiences can see the value in sharing stories New collecting initiatives will be based on strong foundations	Belfast Stories creates a new partnership model for reuse of existing stories and the commissioning of new stories Belfast Stories is a model of best practice for reuse of existing collections and new collecting initiatives Storytellers and the people of Belfast feel that Belfast Stories does justice to our stories

Credits and References

This report was prepared by Starling Start Limited in May 2023, on behalf of Belfast City Council. This version is final submission.

Image credits

- Front cover image: Item from the Cara-Friend Letters Archive. Photo by Becky Cruze, courtesy of Cara-Friend. All rights reserved.
- Watermark image: "Bank of Ireland, Belfast" by itmpa, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0. Image source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/97595808@N00/45717162351.
- Figure 4 (word cloud) generated using TagCrowd.com

List of quotes

- "Liberation is always…" Solnit, Rebecca (2017). *The Mother of all Questions.*
- "In the scullery…" Belfast Interface Partnership (2018). *Reflected Lives*.
- "You don't know what's valuable…" Interview with David Hyndman as part of this audit.
- "When they took away…" Interview with Carrick Hill resident as part of this audit.
- "These were resourceful…" Mistéil, Domhnáill (2014). *Bealach na hAislinge / Dreamways.*
- "The Orange Hall…" Northern Visions (2008). *Our Generation.*
- "The light getting turned on…" Northern Visions (2008). *Our Generation.*
- "You don't know where…" Interview with Adam Murray as part of this audit.
- "Lockdown hit…" 9ft in Common Alleyway Map Stories (2021): https://9ftincommon.com/belfastalleymap/
- "I think of when my mummy…" PLACE (2019). *A Sense of Place: North Belfast Care Zone.*

Appendix 5: Stories Audit

Starling Start, May 2023

https://www.starlingstart.com/