

ashton

Supporting North Belfast



Healthy North Belfast



MLAs Paula Bradley DUP, Nichola Mallon SDLP, Carál Ní Chuilín Sinn Féin with Community and Statutory partners

What do you like about living in North Belfast? What makes you healthy and happy?

These are a few of the questions being asked by the Healthy North Belfast project team who are designing a plan for the area's future that is informed by local voices and experiences.

We would really value your input

and would encourage you to take a few minutes and join in the Healthy North Belfast conversation by completing our survey at www.survey-monkey.co.uk/r/healthynorthbelfast. This is your opportunity to make a difference and help shape the future health of your local area.

"North Belfast has assets, people and places to be proud of, and we

want to learn more about these resources. The best way to do this is to ask local people. They understand what works to help them feel healthy and well better than anyone," Healthy North Belfast Facilitator, Richard O'Rawe explained.

"We want to build on what is strong, not what's wrong and that's why we want people to get involved, and

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Introduction

This is the first of what we hope will be an annual publication by Ashton, North Belfast's premier regeneration charity. Ashton was established in 1991 to improve people's lives in North Belfast. We hope this booklet will provide information about our services that we group into key areas.

- Health & Wellbeing
- Youth Development
- Arts
- Training & Employment
- Community Development
- Childcare & Family Support
- FabLab Belfast

"We are really proud to say that we help people move forward in their lives on a daily basis. We hope that this publication will inform people living in North Belfast about our important family services that are local, accessible and person-centred. We are committed to the development and growth of social enterprise in North Belfast and across the wider region."

(Paul Roberts)



Our mission is 'To promote positive change and improve the quality of life of the North Belfast community. Today we employ nearly 250 people and are one of Belfast's top employers. Over 70% of our staff are from North Belfast and last year, in salaries alone, Ashton put over £3.5m into the local economy. Research from QUB has shown for every £1 spent by Ashton, 78p is spent or re-spent in the North Belfast area.

Over the years our community development ethos and spirit have been commended in tandem with achievement of best practice standards from global bodies such as ISO and European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM).

Ashton won Northern Ireland Social Enterprise of the Year title twice in recent years and received the 'Highly Commended' award for its business excellence and contribution to society in the UK Social Enterprise Awards. Ashton's training and employment department holds the Matrix Quality Standard Award which is a unique quality standard for organisations to assess and measure their advice and support services.

Other accolades include winning the top title at the NI Advancing Healthcare Awards. The 'Overall Winner' and 'Innovation & Creativity' Award recognised Ashton's Health & Wellbeing department for its physiotherapy partnership with BHSCCT supporting people with conflict-related pain.

Our vision is for a thriving community that is enabled, supported and empowered. We work to achieve that every day with our staff, partners and community to deliver outcomes that will support this generation, and generations that come after us. It's a team effort at Ashton and I'm proud to say we deliver quality services that make a difference to local people. We hope you enjoy reading this publication and learn more about Ashton and the difference we are making in North Belfast.

Healthy North Belfast

Get your voice heard

Continued from page 1

get your voice heard," Richard O'Rawe added.

The aim of Healthy North Belfast is to improve health and wellbeing for everyone in North Belfast.

"We intend to focus on doing more of what the community tells us is already working, build on what works well and look at new projects or partnerships that can have a positive impact on health and quality of life. This will really make a change for our generation and those generations to come," Richard said.

Healthy North Belfast has secured the support of major government, health and academic agencies and is actively supported by DUP, SF and SDLP North Belfast MLAs. Ashton facilitates the multi-agency task group that drives the project and includes: North Belfast residents, Lighthouse, NICVA, Ulster University, Belfast Healthy Cities, PHA, PSNI, Housing Executive, Department of Justice, Strategic Investment Board, Department of Health, Belfast City Council, Victims & Survivors Service, Department for Communities, Department of Education and the Health and Social Care Board and Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. The task group will work together to develop an action plan to improve health and wellbeing in North Belfast. This will be published at the end of 2019.

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Keep up to date with Healthy North Belfast on Facebook @healthynorthbelfast and Twitter @healthynbelfast. Strike up a conversation about this work using the hashtag #healthynorthbelfast. If you would like to find out more, contact project manager Janice Smith on 028 9032 2289 or email janice.smith@ashtoncentre.com

To keep up to date with all our exciting engagements and details, like [@healthynorthbelfast](https://www.facebook.com/healthynorthbelfast) on Facebook, or follow [@healthynbelfast](https://twitter.com/healthynbelfast) on Twitter.



**"We want to build
on what is strong..."**

Meeting the needs of families

Community Family Support Programme



Mum of 3 Martina Beattie, said the Family Support Project met the needs of her family.

A local mum has commended Ashton's Community Family Support Programme for its services in helping her access job opportunities and improve quality of life for her family.

The Community Family Support Programme is a training and employability service aimed at families who have family support needs and are not currently engaged in training, employment or education.

It is part of a city-wide consortium and aims to support families living in North Belfast through a range of services that address stress management, behaviour support, budgeting and social isolation.

To date the programme has been very successful with many positive outcomes for families involved. Participants have been supported with gaining employment, entering training to meet their goals and a range of family support issues.

Martina Beattie is a mum of three and came to the Family Support Programme in the summer of 2018 for training and support.

"Initially I was nervous in reaching out for support but the girls were very welcoming and immediately made me feel at ease. They told me all about what the programme entailed and the support I could access. This sounded perfect for me and would meet the needs of me and my family."

Martina added that the support she received helped to stabilise her financial situation and improve social and emotional wellbeing.

"I received one to one mentoring with creating a CV, job searching online and completing application forms," Martina added.

"I also completed a work sampling application form and have had the opportunity to see what it would feel like to be back in a working environment."

"I have been working within the reception in Ashton and this has enabled me to develop my skills, work alone and as part of a team and overall gain the confidence to enter back into employment. I was very happy with the service I received and would recommend the project to others."

Other participants recently completed a food course in partnership with Supporting Families North Belfast where participants had the opportunity to cook healthy meals for the whole family and engage in yoga classes for relaxation, de-stressing and healthy lifestyle choices. Some families also availed of work sampling through Ashton to move them closer to employment in the near future.

The Community Family Support Programme is part-funded through the NI European Social Fund Programme 2014-2020 and the Department for the Economy.

If you wish to find out any more information about the Community Family Support Project Contact **Kris Morrison** on **02890742255** or email: kris.morrison@ashtoncentre.com

QUB Partnership

Harnessing top academic research for community benefit.

Ashton have entered into a partnership with Queen's University Belfast to harness the latest academic thinking around innovative social and economic opportunities that will benefit North Belfast.

A Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) enables a business or organisation to bring in new skills as well as the latest academic research to deliver a specific, strategic innovation project. This KTP represents a three-way partnership between Ashton, an academic team from QUB and an employed associate from the University.

"KTPs not only benefit the host company, in this case Ashton, but also helps the University establish closer links with the sector so that its research and teaching activities reflect the needs of the broader economy and combine to create real benefits for local people," Dr Andrew Grounds, KTP Associate explained.

In the past, KTPs have proven to be highly effective in creating both economic and social value for organisations operating across a wide range of sectors. At present there are a number of local KTP projects operating, predominantly in the private sector who also receive additional support and resources from a central body called Innovate UK as well as locally via Invest NI.

The KTP between Ashton and QUB will focus on three main areas. The first will be to provide a better understanding of current market sectors to help sustain and scale some of Ashton's existing social business lines. Secondly the KTP will aim to develop some of its own existing monitoring and evaluation systems that better record social, economic and environmental impact. Finally, it will provide additional guidance and support to Ashton's senior management team on both strategic and operational matters.



"This KTP reflects a commitment by Ashton to continue to seek out new working partners. In this case a Russell Group University such as Queen's University Belfast which will help Ashton sustain and grow its existing service base, and help us in our mission to provide meaningful opportunities for local people living across North Belfast," Paul Roberts, Ashton Chief Executive said. The Ashton QUB KTP commenced in February 2019 and will run until 2021.

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Positive to the Core

Core Project: Feel Confident & job ready.



Supporting young people to feel job ready and enter the world of employment is a key goal of the Ashton's Core Project.

The Core Project is a bespoke employability programme for young people aged 16-24, who are not in employment, education or training and live in North Belfast. It is part-funded through the NI European Social Fund Programme 2014-2020 and the Department for the Economy and delivered by Ashton's Training & Employment Department via the Core Project team.

"This initiative offers a wide range of training and employment services that are flexible and able to meet the requirements of a young person," Pat Boyle Ashton's Head of Training & Employment explained.

"This means that services can be tailored to provide the right kind of support. This may include taking part in week-long job academies, engaging with mock interview and coaching sessions, CV support, or master classes in hospitality, beauty or transport. Our mentoring services are very popular and so beneficial for those who need to feel more job ready, gain confidence and take that first step towards employment."

A unique benefit of Core Project is that staff speak directly to employers on your behalf, work with them and secure interviews for participants. The team also host job academies in specific employment areas such as customer service training which involved First Source and Concentrix businesses.

The Core Project also delivers 1 to 1 mentoring service as part of their goal to address individual needs. Participants are assigned a dedicated mentor who support them on their journey and offer individual skills and development

These needs/barriers can include issues such as mental health, lack of academic achievement, family problems or social issues. The Core Project team have relationships with a wide range of support organisations (e.g. counselling services, family mediation, etc) where they can refer young people or signpost.

Another element of Core Project is the SWEET Programme. SWEET is designed to help young people overcome barriers and improve confidence through accredited training in areas such as sexual health/drugs, alcohol/mental health, suicide awareness, confidence/motivation and money management. A recent programme saw young people receive a motivational talk from James McGivern, a local boxer who is a Commonwealth Bronze medallist. Another recent example saw eight young people from North Belfast secure an impressive apprenticeship package with Stena Line. Participants were supported by the CORE team with their CV, application writing, interview skills and qualifications. If you are not currently in education, employment or training, aged 16-24, living in North Belfast and would like free support in finding employment or training opportunities give the CORE team a call on **028 9560 9522** or core@ashtoncentre.com or get in touch via Facebook.

"The unique benefit of this project is that staff speak directly to employers on your behalf, work with them and secure interviews for participants at the end of job academies."

Reconnecting North Belfast

Ashton's Regeneration Vision

Huge investments are being made regenerating Belfast City Centre and Ashton believes it is crucial that North Belfast is fully integrated into strategic planning and design processes and any future economic and social benefits.

Ashton has engaged with politicians and statutory bodies over many years to influence policy direction and is offering its own alternative solutions for physical reintegration on the area running from Lower Shankill in an arc around to Sailortown. This vision relates to buildings, vacant sites, streets and other spaces currently being developed by statutory authorities. Road infrastructure and design is a key issue to bring walking and connectivity benefits including:

- Making safe and high quality pedestrian friendly streets.
- Investment incentives, bringing activity and jobs.
- Addressing physical barriers to employment, education and services.
- Stimulate tourism and wider civic awareness of North Belfast assets.

To help achieve this Ashton has identified 7 key developments which includes:

York Road Axis: Reactivating a number of vacant sites including the old Midland Hotel along with regeneration of Yorkgate Rail Station would revitalise this important urban intersection of Lower North Belfast.

Yorkgate Station: As a major revamp of city rail stations continues, Yorkgate is the best renewal option for North Belfast. The nearby UU campus increases footfall of the station and an elevator access from street level could be integrated. This underused site contains 160,000 square feet of commercial development space and could act as a key hub.

Bridge to Titanic Quarter: A bridge linking Sailortown/City Quays to Titanic Quarter would create an East/North reconnection and drive regeneration. North Belfast residents would benefit from direct access to Belfast Met, the Science Park and Airport Road.

York Street Interchange: The Interchange will facilitate regional traffic but will bring years of construction disruption. A more obvious benefit for residents would be the creation of walking routes along York Street to the proposed Bridge and Rail Station. One major association has focused on the project being funded by City Deal funding, supported by a cluster of local businesses.

Clifton Street: The North Belfast Housing Regeneration Project is a diverse alliance including St Anne's Church, the Orange Hall, Indian Community Centre, Carlisle Memorial Church, Workingmen's Club and Carnegie Library. The emerging project on Clifton Street respects the scale of the area and the fine listed buildings located near the station. The project will develop frontage to enliven the street.

Youth Centre: A city centre youth centre could be housed near UU providing a gateway for young people.

Giants Park: The North Belfast Regeneration Project should incorporate direct, easy access to the Fortwilliam roundabout and a wide pedestrian bridge across the river to create improved opportunities for North Belfast to access open spaces.

Addressing physical barriers to employment, education and services.

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Ashton Kinderkids

Investing in local children and families

Ashton provides childcare through its social enterprise Kinderkids Daycare which operates at four locations in North Belfast: Ashton Centre, Cliftonville Road and two daycare facilities at the newly extended McSweeney Centre close to Carlisle Circus. Currently Kinderkids caters for almost 300 children across the four sites offering both daycare and afterschool services.

Kinderkids is open between 8am and 6pm and offers a range of childcare options to suit the needs of working parents and families, from one day to a full week. The social enterprise offers competitive prices, making childcare affordable and accessible to working families.

Kinderkids works closely with education and training providers, and provides childcare for many parents who have chosen to remain in education/ training or who are returning to it after a break.

Kinderkids delivers a high quality care and play experience to all children using the service, which is based around the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

The EYFS is delivered across all Kinderkids' facilities to ensure a consistent approach towards learning and development that will support the transition process into Nursery or Primary School. Kinderkids firmly believe that a high quality play experience in the Early Years will encourage and foster a holistic approach to each individual child's overall development. Staff are fully trained, have ongoing professional development and adhere to best practice guidelines.



**“Kinderkids is amazing,
the staff are great and
my son just loves it.”**

NEW

"Parents consistently rank our daycare services very highly and tell us how happy their children are with us," Ashton's Head of Childcare & Family Support Christine McKeown said.

"Feedback comments collected through annual surveys demonstrate that we are meeting local needs and we are helping to ensure working families go to work secure in the knowledge that their children are being cared for in a safe, secure and happy environment."

Here are a selection of comments from parents:

- "Kinderkids is amazing, the staff are great and my son just loves it."
- "My child is so stress free and the engagement with other children from different schools opens new friendships for him."
- "Kinderkids staff really care about the children, they try to make every day as enjoyable as possible"
- "I know when I leave my child to daycare that he is in a loving and caring environment. My son and myself have built a great relationship with the staff, it is the best start I could want for him in life."

If you would like to find out more information about Kinderkids Daycare

Contact:

Fionnuala Black at
Ashton Centre 0289074 2255
Email fionnuala@ashtoncentre.com
or Ashton's Head of Childcare & Family Support
Christine McKeown on
christine.mckeown@ashtoncentre.com.

NURSERY

North Belfast Men's Shed

Re-energising the lives of older men

If finding a new lease of life is on the horizon and you're seeking that perfect space to rediscover purpose in life, then look no further than Ashton's North Belfast Men's Shed project. North Belfast Men's Shed is a cross community project based in Edenderry Industrial Estate on the Crumlin Road. The project is funded by the Big Lottery and was set up in 2012 to tackle the impact of social isolation amongst older men.

"Feeling valued, having a purpose and being socially connected is important for all of us and even more so in the years following retirement, illness or bereavement," Geraldine Nelson, Ashton's Men's Shed Project Coordinator explained.

"In North Belfast there are many factors that increase feelings of isolation amongst men including deprivation, income, transport, disability and issues relating to the legacy of the conflict. Despite these challenges one of the things that makes Ashton's North Belfast Men Shed project stand out is the commitment its members have towards the success of the project and in helping other men feel more positive, less isolated and re-energised with a purpose."

North Belfast Men's Shed is a project that is run by its members for its members. A team of over 50 men are involved in the day-to-day running of the Shed and volunteer their time to ensure the project runs smoothly. All project members

A Shed Management team, made up of 12 shed members, meets on a monthly basis to coordinate the projects activities and manage its budget. Duty volunteers take it in turns to oversee the opening, operation and closing of the Shed each day. Skilled volunteers share their talents with other shed members and take their skills out to the wider community to share them with members of other community organisations and projects.

Member's go out of their way to help out whoever they can whenever they can. This could be giving them lifts, organising 'Get Well' cards, visiting members in hospital or at home when they are unwell or just taking time to sit and listen when a member needs some moral support.

Recently the men volunteered to make squirrel boxes for the Ulster Wildlife Foundation, bird boxes for Cavehill Conservation Project, planters for Cavehill Primary School, and also worked with 15 North Belfast schools to produce buddy benches, welly boot stands, and garden planters. They also made a garden bench for a local care home, delivered craft classes to members of a local Day Centre and made around 200 lanterns for PIPS charity World Suicide Awareness Day

Another important aspect of the Men's Shed is that members volunteer their time to make and sell items at local craft fairs and Shed open days. This has allowed the men to generate income to support overall running costs and to subsidise social activities such as visiting the Railway Preservation Society, going to a local museum, taking trips to places of interest or organising an annual shed barbecue for friends and family.

By becoming a member and subsequently volunteering for North Belfast Men's Shed, men are making a difference to the lives of themselves, other people and the wider community. The opportunity to give back to the community contributes to a sense of achievement, accomplishment, self-esteem and well-being. To find out more or to become a member of Ashton's North Belfast Men's Shed contact **Geraldine Nelson** Telephone **07850651263** or **028 90322289** Email **mensshed@ashtoncentre.com**





"Feeling valued, having a purpose and being socially connected..."

Belfast Works

Get Back into Employment with Support from Speciali

The Belfast Works Project is a citywide programme targeting those furthest from the labour market and supporting them back into employment.

The project is delivered by the Belfast Works LEMIS+ consortium led by Ashton in conjunction with GEMS NI, Upper Springfield Development Trust (Job Assist Centre West Belfast), Impact Training (Job Assist Centre Greater Shankill) and East Belfast Mission (Stepping Stone).

The Belfast Works Project is part-funded through the NI European Social Fund Programme 2014 – 2020, Department for the Economy and also receives financial support from Belfast City Council and Urban Villages.

The Belfast Works Project is designed to give those most removed from the labour market the best opportunities to get the skills they need to return to or enter the world of work.

In North Belfast, the Ashton Belfast Works team provides 1-to-1 client-centred support from the Ashton Centre in Churchill Street, 529 Antrim Road as well as outreach venues.

Since April 2018 the team have worked with over 500 people of all ages from across North Belfast. Over 100 of them have moved directly into employment and almost 280 have completed training gaining over 360 accreditations.



Jacqueline Mc Aree 57, from North Belfast, started working when she left school and was self-employed when her circumstances changed, which resulted in her becoming unemployed.

She recently benefited from coming to Belfast Works. "I really enjoyed keeping busy and meeting new people and wanted to get back into employment," Jacqueline said.

Jacqueline had been looking for support for over six months when she heard about Belfast Works. Wanting to find out more she called into her local office at the Ashton Centre and spoke with Kathleen, a BelfastWorks mentor.

She got support with her CV, interview techniques, job goals and has completed training in customer service. She also brushed up on her I.C.T skills and finished the Customer Care Academy.

"BelfastWorks has given me the skills and training to find employment in customer service, something that I am passionate about," Jacqueline said. "Not only have I learnt new things but my confidence has increased and I feel ready. To anyone and to especially people around my age, it's not too late to learn, as you have skills still to offer".

The project offers a complete wrap around support service for clients who are dealing with health and wellbeing issues (e.g. mental health or anxiety). Whilst external referrals can be made, Belfast Works also have a team of staff that help people to build confidence and set goals which will help them progress towards employment. The team also supports people to engage in both accredited/non-accredited training in a range of courses from basic IT to industry related courses in health and social care, childcare, hospitality, and business administration.

Using an Employer Liaison Service, staff work directly with employers to develop a range of provision which will help those with the least skills get the industry basics (e.g. in construction) which will allow them to gain access to jobs.

If you think you would like to get back into employment or make a positive change in your life and move towards employment give the Belfast Works Project at Ashton a call on **028 90742255**.

"It's not too late to learn, as you have skills still to offer"

Families First

Lower North Belfast Family Support Hub

Services provided by the Lower North Belfast Family Support Hub, led by Ashton, have been described by a school vice principal as a 'life saver'.

Clare McKeever, Vice Principal of St Patrick's Primary School said the network of services provided by the Hub were invaluable.

"Our school has greatly benefited from the support provided by the Lower North Belfast Family Support Hub. With some of our children and their families, we are looking for ways in which we can help them and the Hub offers a wide range of services that offers support. On behalf of the staff, pupils and families of our school may I thank you all most sincerely. Keep up the great work."

The Lower North Belfast Family Support Hub provides early intervention services to families and young people requiring support. The Hub brings together organisations that deliver services to children/young people (0-18 years) and their parents/carers and this includes community, statutory and voluntary family support services. In North Belfast there are 62 members who deliver appropriate services and these organisations work together to provide a holistic service.

Gary Symington of suicide prevention charity Lighthouse said:
"As a member of the Lower North Belfast Family Support Hub, it is extremely encouraging to be part of a working multi-disciplinary partnership that has family life at the core. The sense of good will and passion for creating a better quality

of life for local families is immense within the membership. This is a great example of the power and the results that are possible from effective collaboration in the heart of the community."

Since 2015, Ashton has been co-ordinating referrals and working to connect families to services they need at a time when they need them. The wards covered by the Hub are: New Lodge, Duncairn, Fortwilliam, Castleview, Waterworks (part of), Chichester Park (part of) and Bellevue. The team works closely with schools, GPs, Health Visitors and community organisations in the area.

Should you have any queries about the Hub or wish to refer your family to the Hub please contact **Edith McManus**, Lower North Belfast Family Support Hub Co-ordinator at the Ashton Centre **02890 749986**.



"Our school has greatly benefited from the support provided by the Lower North Belfast Family Support Hub."

Bridge of Hope

Bringing Health & Wellbeing to North Belfast



Ashton's award winning health and wellbeing project Bridge of Hope delivers services to help manage and reduce stress, and encourage the development of positive, healthy and resilient lives. Wellbeing services include:

- Complementary Therapies
- Life Coaching
- Counselling and Psychological Therapies
- Accredited training in Complementary Therapies
- Personal Development workshops
- Conflict/Legacy programmes
- PEACE IV Health & Wellbeing Caseworker Support

This range of support is available to those affected by the conflict, poor mental health and suicide and self-harm. It is made possible through funding from the Victims & Survivors Service, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) and Public Health Agency.

If you are interested in accessing support, get in touch with the team on **028 9022 1022** or **028 9543 8707**. You can self-refer or be referred by a family, friend, community group, GP or public body. Bridge of Hope's bespoke clinics operate from the McSweeney Centre and 16 Alliance Avenue as well as various outreach centres.



UU and North Belfast

Community Benefit Framework



(From left: Jackie Redpath , Paddy Nixon, Paul Roberts & Rafaella Folli)

"Our communities have faced significant challenges over many years, and this Benefit Framework is our joint commitment to work together to create real and tangible benefits for the community. One of the first actions is the Community Fellows programme which will improve links between the community and the university. This is very much the starting point and we look forward to many more positive actions that will be realised over the coming months and years." Paul Roberts

Ashton and the Inner North Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership (INNRP) have been involved in lengthy discussions with Ulster University in light of their planned move to York Street on the outskirts of North Belfast. The result of 5 years talks and negotiations is now visible with a series of concrete actions as outlined in the Community Benefit Framework document accessible [here](#) [LINK](#)

The Community Benefit Framework, developed jointly with INNRP, Greater Shankill Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership and UU will help realise social, educational, environmental and economic benefits to the local community that will arise from additional 15,000 students and staff based at UU's new development in York Street.

Paul Roberts Ashton Chief Executive and Chair of INNRP commented: "The Inner North Belfast Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership is very pleased to be part of this Community Benefit Framework. The Framework is a co-designed action plan that covers areas such as research, widening access and participation in education, arts and events and improving educational achievement.

"It is evidence of a new level of partnership working between the North Belfast Community and the University designed to realise the social, educational, environmental and economic benefits that will arise from the relocation of Ulster University to North Belfast from Jordanstown.



(Above: **Ulster University Belfast Campus proposed redesign**)

Ulster University Vice-Chancellor Professor Paddy Nixon said: "The £250 million investment in the Belfast campus will transform the local area and is intrinsically linked to the Belfast Agenda and City Deal proposals. We remain fully committed to working with the local community to enhance education provision, to develop improved educational and research outcomes, increased career opportunities and consequently a reduction in economic inactivity to create a thriving city with a prosperous economy."

Provost of Belfast and Jordanstown campuses Professor Raffaella Folli said: "The Community Framework builds on our existing relationship with our neighbours in North Belfast.

In recent months we have created a number of opportunities to invite our neighbours to experience first-hand the range of facilities and ex-

pertise available at Ulster University's civic spaces. I look forward to working with our community partners to ensure the transition of students to the Belfast campus is smooth and the mutual benefits are realised."

Angela Scanlon, Head of the Centre for Flexible Education at Ulster University said: "Our Community Fellow programme is designed as an educational initiative that will reach into the local community. The Fellows will provide essential community visibility and voice when working through a range of opportunities and challenges. Our commitment to welcoming eleven successful champions from across the region, including North Belfast, will be a catalyst for transforming our civic network and impact across Northern Ireland."

In addition to the community fellows and an ambassador programme, the community framework sets out a range of priorities for Ulster University and the Inner North Neighbourhood and Greater Shankill Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships in areas such as widening access to education, improving aspiration and achievement for boys in North Belfast, community arts spaces and collaboration opportunities and much more.

New Lodge Arts

Young People Excel Through Arts, Dance & Drama

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Ashton's New Lodge Arts is a thriving arts organisation that has provided innovative, fun and educational activities to children and young people right across North Belfast over the last 15 years.

Set up in 2003, New Lodge Arts has embedded itself at the heart of North Belfast, providing over 800 workshops per year with 2,000 young people participating. With a strong community focus and a passion for supporting the needs of young people it prides itself on inspiring young people to grow and succeed.

Each year, New Lodge Arts manage a range of projects aimed at meeting the needs of the community and providing opportunities for young people to grow and develop. This includes a range of weekly classes in Dance, Drama & Art, a seasonal Festival Programme including Spring Awakening, Summer Arts Academy, Lantern Festival and Winterfest, and an extensive programme of work in partnership with local community and arts organisations.

The Spring Awakening Festival, delivered by New Lodge Arts offers something for all ages. There will be an array of street theatre, live music, food stalls, dance acts, circus performers, sports and much more. The festival will focus on building good relations among communities, providing an opportunity for celebration. The foundation of the project is the outreach programme with schools and community groups.

Alexandra Park will come alive on Saturday 30th March 2019 from 12pm-4pm.

Anne Delaney from Ashton's New Lodge Arts said: "The Spring Awakening Festival is in its fourth year and has something for everyone with some of the very best local talent Belfast has to offer. It is an excellent example of communities working together to promote good relations and maximise the use of shared space. It is a great showcase for the positive contribution children and young people make to our communities. Hundreds of local children will take part in a series of art workshops in preparation and the young people always put lots of effort and energy into making the Festival an enjoyable event for everyone.

"We want to encourage local people to come along, have fun and support their community. The event is free of charge, all we ask is that you remember to bring your wellies and a poncho to weather any possible seasonal showers.

For further information contact **Anne Delaney** on **02890742255** or email **anne.delaney@ashtoncentre.com**

The event is funded through The Executive Office's Central Good Relations Programme and supported by Belfast City Council.

Leap Forward & Flourish

Breakthrough Young People's Project

"The talent unlocked during the course of the programme has been beyond what we could have ever imagined"

Katrina Newell (Ashton Head of Youth, Arts & FabLab)

A new and exciting programme aimed at engaging young people across North Belfast, Shankill and Newtownabbey is recruiting for participants.

The €3.4m Breakthrough Programme, which is financed through the EU's PEACE IV Programme, is aimed at young people aged 14-24 years.

The programme led by Ashton is delivered in partnership with Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum; New Life City Church; YEHA Project; Street Beat; Newtownabbey Arts and Cultural Network; New Lodge Arts and Loughview Community Action Partnership.

North Belfast schools including Blessed Trinity College, Boys Model, Edmund Rice and Mercy College are also engaged.

The aim of the work is to achieve sustainable, positive change through a variety of creative methods that includes Art, Film, Sport, Digital Fabrication and Music.

The strength of Breakthrough is its person-centred approach Ashton's Head of Youth, Arts & FabLab Katrina Newell explained:

"Phase 1 of the Programme was an amazing success with over 180 young people engaging from across the North Belfast, Shankill and Newtownabbey areas. Some hidden talents were discovered, new training opportunities identified and friendships made. Creating an environment where young people have access to all the support services they need is very important and can make all the difference to a young person and their ability to fully engage, grow and flourish."

Breakthrough participants have already benefited from group work, mentoring, team building and residential experiences. Meanwhile those engaging in Breakthrough's school element, were supported to stay in school to complete exams.

"The talent unlocked during the course of the programme has been beyond what we could have ever imagined," Katrina added.

"Giving young people the space to grow in confidence and have structure with activities that are meaningful to them does make a difference to their aspirations and goals in life."

Recruitment for Breakthrough's 2019 Programme is now open.

- Are you **16-24**?
- Would you like to take part in a **6-month programme**, at least 3 days per week?
- Explore personal development, citizenship, good relations & volunteering?
- Would like to meet new friends, build your confidence and learn new skills?
- Gain **OCN Qualifications**?
- Get involved in team building & residentials?
- Get up to **£8 per day*** subject to eligibility?
- Get access to **FREE Childcare and Transport**.

The PEACE IV Programme has a total value of €270m and is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body. Match-funding for the project has been provided by the Northern Ireland Executive and the Department for Children and Youth Affairs in Ireland.

Follow Breakthrough on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/breakthroughbelfast/> or Twitter @BreakthroughIV

For more information, contact **Sean Breen** on **028 90742255** or email sean.breen@ashton-centre.com

Uniting Communities

Exciting Youth Work Programme

The Uniting Communities Programme is a new and exciting youth work programme for young people aged 11-24 years living in Ardoyne and Ballysillan. This North Belfast element is managed by Ashton and is funded by the Department for Communities. Uniting Communities through Sport and Creativity Programme is one of seven headline actions in the 'Together: Building a United Community' (T:BUC) strategy.

The Uniting Communities Programme uses sport, physical and creative activity to build good relations between young people and communities and has been extended to the Ardoyne and Ballysillan Urban Village area. Led by Ashton, the programme is delivered in partnership with Ardoyne Youth Centre, Ardoyne Youth Enterprises, North Belfast Alternatives, FabLab Belfast, New Lodge Arts and TAMHI. This segment of T:BUC is focused on delivering community based activity for 11-16 year olds.

A Young Leaders Training and Ambassadors programme for 16-24 year olds is another key focus of the project with training provided by the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust and Peace Players NI.

Since the programme launch in October 2018 young people have been involved in team building days, residential programmes and weekly sessions in sports, physical and creative activities.

Participants also enjoyed connecting with other young people in activities hosted by Belfast Activity Centre, TAMHI and Flex Fitness. These sessions have good relations themes incorporated in order to explore and learn about culture and identity.

Marc Young coordinates the Bally-

sillan programme whilst Caitlin Ewing coordinates Ardoyne. Both coordinators are supported by local youth workers in each area and all staff work with young people to build a fun and exciting programme that meets their needs. Young people also care very much about the world they live in, and together they look at local and global world issues where they would like to make a difference. Looking at poverty affecting Romania, they decided to host a shoe box appeal and collected items such as toys, toiletries, chocolates, pens and pencils to send to an orphanage. In relation to local issues, young people wanted to run a toy appeal for the Children's Cancer Unit. The appeal drew lots of attention and donations were astounding across both communities.

Anna McDonald from the Children's Cancer Unit said: "Donations like these are so important. Some children receive specialist treatment in isolation, and that means anything they come in to contact with must be clinically clean or brand new. As well as ensuring these children have plenty to keep them occupied and to help put smiles on their faces, donations of toys can also be used to help families who may be

struggling to make ends meet. We are so grateful to this fantastic group of young people for all their efforts."



If you would like to find out more about the Uniting Communities Programme contact:

Caroline Delaney on
028 9074 2255
or email
caroline.delaney@ashtoncentre.com



The Agency
makers of **change**

£2000 TO MAKE YOUR IDEA A REALITY



Join the Agency and turn your passion into a project. We're looking for 15-25 year olds from North Belfast with ideas that need to happen. We'll give you the professional training, support, funding and advice you need to make your project benefit your local community. This could be anything from boxing workshops to a music festival. You'll pitch your idea to an expert panel to win £2000. You will make positive change, lead a unique business and gain the skills you need to achieve. For further information contact Elaine McIlroy on (028) 90742255 or email: elaine.mcilroy@ashtoncentre.com