



Inclusive Cities Action Plan

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Autumn 2022



Belfast
City Council



part of the Global Exchange
on Migration & Diversity
@COMPAS

Inclusive Cities Action Plan

Promoting an Inclusive City sits at the heart of Belfast's overarching values, ambitions, and strategies. The city's Community Planning document, the 'Belfast Agenda', sets out a shared vision for the future of the city, one which seeks to improve the lives and wellbeing outcomes of all citizens in Belfast and to ensure the city is a place where people want to work, study, visit and invest.

Our commitment to inclusion was reflected in the unanimous support from Council Members, in April 2022, with the adoption of a motion pledging support to implement a 'City of Sanctuary'.

In 2019, the Council launched its new and revised Good Relations strategy. This strategy sets out a vision of a Shared City – a city reimagined, connected and resurgent; delivering inclusive growth that leaves no-one behind. The strategy acknowledges that promoting and achieving Good Relations is 'everyone's business' and contains 5 outcomes which seek to build Good Relations: through civic leadership; shared and connected spaces; shared services; effective partnerships and through an intercultural city.

Northern Ireland has historically been one of the least ethnically diverse regions of the United Kingdom, however over the past 20 years, Belfast has experienced an increase in the number of people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities making Belfast their home. The main growth periods coincided with the expansion of the European Union in 2004 and in 2007, when many EU Nationals moved to the city. In the past decade there has also been an increase in the number of people who have sought asylum in Belfast. New communities and their descendants have made significant and lasting contributions to Belfast. The integration and inclusion of new Communities has been a strong priority for Belfast City Council, with the recognition that we cannot build an inclusive Belfast where inequalities and discrimination affect people's opportunities and impact on how citizens interact with each other.

Our approach to promoting an Inclusive City has been centered on supporting the integration and inclusion of new communities as well as supporting host communities to respond to diversity positively. This approach also recognises that key to inclusion is the need to tackle inequality, disadvantage, and discrimination.

The Council views inclusion as a shared responsibility and recognises the Inclusive Cities Framework as an important guide for framing our approach.

Get in touch

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LEADING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SHARED LOCAL STORY OF INCLUSION

Actions to achieve this priority	Progress to date	How this supports the strategic priorities of the city	Lead responsible for delivery	Resources needed to accomplish the priority and action	Timescale	Success Criteria
<p>We will promote Belfast as an Inclusive City and support the City of Sanctuary Movement.</p> <p>We will convene a working group in the Council to develop a Race Equality Action Plan.</p>	<p>In April 2022 Belfast City Council (BCC) endorsed Belfast as a City of Sanctuary and passed a motion resolving the Council to become a 'Council of Sanctuary'.</p> <p>Race Equality Action Plan group convened.</p>	<p>Complements the 'Belfast Agenda', the City's Community Planning and its vision for the future of the city, one which seeks to improve the lives and wellbeing outcomes of all citizens in Belfast and to ensure the city is a place where people want to work, study, visit and invest.</p> <p>Belfast Agenda</p>	<p>City and Neighbourhood Services Department, BCC</p> <p>Led by Corporate Human Resources Unit with the input from all Departments in Council.</p>	<p>Staff time</p> <p>Cultural Competence Training for Staff.</p>	<p>Ongoing commitment</p> <p>March 2022 – April 2023.</p>	<p>Unanimous Council Support recognising Belfast as a City of Sanctuary</p> <p>Group convened working; terms of reference adopted.</p> <p>Council endorsement of Action Plan.</p>
<p>Outreach from the Lord Mayor's Office to develop civic engagement with New Communities in the City</p> <p>The Lord Mayor has adopted the theme of "Our Belfast – a more inclusive, forward thinking and kinder city" as her guiding objective for her time in office, committing to actively reaching out to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities to understand their lived experience in the city.</p>	<p>Over 20 civic visits have been made to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Support Organisations, and smaller networks that have had less contact with Belfast City Council.</p>		<p>Lord Mayor's Office.</p>	<p>Staff time.</p>	<p>June 2021 – June 2022.</p>	<p>Outreach was made with 22 support organisations.</p> <p>Communities having their voice listened to and connected with Council and other Services.</p> <p>Greater confidence within Communities in engaging with the Council.</p>
<p>We will run a programme of ongoing DiverseCity initiatives to proudly celebrate and share our city stories of diversity, that will facilitate community contact and conversations around inclusion.</p> <p>We will work with our diverse communities to encourage the shared celebration of festivals in the city, opening access to Council facilities to host inclusive festivals.</p> <p>We will ensure that Council led, and funded festivals and cultural events are inclusive of all communities living in Belfast, such as St. Patrick's Day.</p>	<p>DiverseCity initiatives run including events to mark Refugee Week, Black History Month, Good Relations Week.</p> <p>Support provided to the following festivals Belfast Mela, African Cup of Nations, Chinese New Year, Eid, Refugee picnic.</p>	<p>Support the Councils Good Relations Strategy and our aim of promoting a Shared City and providing opportunities to celebrate cultural diversity.</p> <p>Good relations</p> <p>Complements the Councils Good Relations Strategy and the promotion of a shared city.</p>	<p>Leish Dolan, Good Relations Officer, BCC</p>	<p>Funded through the Council's Good Relations Action Plan developed within the framework of the NI Executive Strategy: Together Building a United Community strategy</p> <p>Funding secured through the Council's Good Relations Action Plan developed within the framework of the Together Building a United Community strategy.</p> <p>Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) The Executive Office executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk</p>	<p>March 2021 – March 2022</p>	<p>Five festivals supported.</p> <p>An increase in the number of organisations from minority ethnic backgrounds participating in Council led festivals.</p> <p>City Hall illumination to mark Eid, Chinese New Year, and other cultural festivals.</p>

We will use our City Matters magazines to promote awareness of our diverse communities and cultures, with features on diversity, migration, and refugee / asylum matters.	Inclusive messaging reinforced in our City Matters. City Matters is our residents' magazine, sent to households in Belfast four times a year.	Complements the Councils Good Relations Strategy and the promotion of a shared city.	Marketing and Corporate Communications, BCC.		Ongoing.	Articles featured in City Matters promoting awareness of Refugee Week and Black History Month as well as other diverse festivals celebrated in the city.
We will support the settlement and inclusion of our refugee community by developing an updated Refugee Transition Guide, to ensure that refugees living in Belfast are aware of their rights and entitlements and supported as they make the transition away from asylum support.	Contract awarded through tendering process.	Complements the Councils Good Relations Strategy.	Leish Dolan, Good Relations Officer, BCC.	Funding secured through the Council's Good Relations Action Plan developed within the framework of the Together Building a United Community strategy.	March 2021 – June 2022.	<p>Twenty advisors trained on how to use the guide</p> <p>200 guides downloaded / disseminated annually</p> <p>Guide translated into five languages.</p>
We will use commemorations and themed events: including Refugee Week, Black History Month, Holocaust Memorial Day, Good Relations Week, International Day of Peace, International Mother Language Day, to organize civic events and promote messaging around inclusion and use them as an opportunity to promote contact and foster good relations between Communities.	City Council to host events fronted by civic leaders to promote inclusion.	Supports the Councils Good Relations Strategy.	Leish Dolan, Good Relations Officer, BCC.	Funding through Good Relations Action Plan.	March 2021 – March 2022.	<p>Up to 200 people attending</p> <p>3 events delivered to Mark Holocaust Memorial Day.</p> <p>2 workshops were run during Refugee Week</p> <p>City Hall was illuminated as part of Refugee Week and to mark Holocaust Memorial.</p>
We will deliver training to encourage bystander interruption of hate crime and to address anti-migrant, anti-muslim, anti-refugee and anti-asylum narratives.	4 training sessions organised, delivered in partnership with Tell MAMA.	Complements the Councils Good Relations Strategy and the priority of promoting a safe and shared city.	Leish Dolan, Good Relations Officer, BCC.	Funding secured through the Council's Good Relations Action Plan developed within the framework of the Together Building a United Community strategy.	March 2021 – 2022.	Training feedback indicating that participants have improved skills and confidence in challenging divisive messaging and behaviour.
We will continue to address access to economic opportunities and promote and encourage uptake from BAME communities by removing barriers that inhibit access such as addressing childcare solutions, having interpreters at engagement roadshows, producing key information about opportunities in minority languages, providing counselling for people experiencing trauma or ill health.	<p>Enhanced uptake of Employment Academy Programme by individuals from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds.</p> <p>The academies provide tailored training to help people get jobs and help businesses with recruitment. They are short, intensive training programmes which include pre-interview training, technical or accredited modules, guaranteed interviews.</p>		Sinead O'Regan, Employability & Skills Manager, BCC.	Funding secured.	Ongoing.	13% of participants in the programme declaring from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities accessing employability programmes.

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

Actions to achieve this priority	Progress to date	How this supports the strategic priorities of the city	Lead responsible for delivery	Resources needed to accomplish the priority and action	Timescale	Success Criteria
We will continue to develop the Council led Migrant Forum that provides a regular consultative forum for information sharing on issues related to inclusion, access, and service delivery for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities.	Review of membership.	Supports the Council's Good Relations and Equality Commitments.	Leish Dolan, Good Relations Officer, BCC.	Funding secured through the Council's good relations programme.	March 2021 – March 2022.	Mapping of Forum Members produced 4 annual meetings 6% growth in membership.
We will continue to promote the use of council community centres and parks as shared spaces, ensuring also that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities are supported to access programmes and activities through these spaces.		Supports the Council's Good Relations and Equality Commitments.	Leish Dolan, Good Relations Officer, BCC.	Staff time.	Ongoing.	Increase in the number of organisations supporting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities using community facilities.
We will provide Grant Aid opportunities for organisations across Belfast to submit project proposals focused on promoting good relations between communities.	Minimum of 2 calls per year. Targeted outreach through the Migrant Forum to ensure awareness and uptake of the fund measured by the number of applications led by Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic support organisations.	Supports the Council's Good Relations Strategy.	Nicola Lane, Good Relations Manager, BCC.	Funding secured.	March 2021 – March 2022.	£150,000 of funding allocated. Increase in organisations supporting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities submitting applications Two calls per year.

MAINSTREAMING AND BUILDING INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SERVICES

Actions to achieve this priority	Progress to date	How this supports the strategic priorities of the city	Lead responsible for delivery	Resources needed to accomplish the priority and action	Timescale	Success Criteria
<p>To better understand the lived experience of people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds living in our city, we have partnered with the Public Health Agency and Belfast Health and Social Care Trust to commission research to explore ethnic inequalities in Belfast.</p> <p>The research will be based around a community participatory research model whereby the contractor will work with 8 People from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds to skill them in participating as co-researchers.</p>	Tendering process complete, contract awarded.	Supports the city's Community Planning document, the 'Belfast Agenda'.	Leish Dolan, Good Relations Officer, BCC.	Funding secured through a partnership consortium.	September 2021 – June 2022.	<p>Tendering process complete, contract awarded</p> <p>8 people trained and assisted to leverage their voices into power</p> <p>Impact of the research in shaping BCC policy making and approach to equity and inclusion.</p> <p>Better understanding of the lived experience of people from different ethnic groups.</p>
We will develop an internal Race Equality and Diversity Action Plan – that will review how we deliver our services and take action as an employer to create a diverse workforce.	Working Group convened.	Supports Equality Framework.	Corporate Human Resources, BCC.	Staff time.	Ongoing.	A Race Equality and Diversity Champion appointed.
We will work to develop a workforce that reflects the communities we serve. We will improve pathways for underrepresented groups in Belfast City Council by delivering a programme of employability outreach to BAME communities ensuring that job and other opportunities are communicated to BAME communities through the migrant forum and other city networks.		Complements the Belfast Agenda and the Council's Equality and Good Relations Outcomes.	TBD	Staff time.	Ongoing.	Increase in the number of people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities applying for Council jobs.
We will ensure every member of staff is required to participate in mandatory equalities training that challenges unconscious bias.	Online option developed.	Supports the Council's Good Relations and Equality Commitments.	Catherine Christy, Senior Manager Human Resources and Organisational Development, BCC.	Funding secured.	Ongoing.	90% of staff having received training.
We will roll out a Language Awareness course for staff, enhancing their competence in providing services to residents whose first language is not English.	Delivery has begun.	Complements the Good Relations and Equality Commitments.	Michael Johnston, Language Officer, Belfast City Council.	Staff time.	Ongoing.	Increase in staff competence in responding to requests in languages other than English.

ENCOURAGING CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

Actions to achieve this priority	Progress to date	How this supports the strategic priorities of the city	Lead responsible for delivery	Resources needed to accomplish the priority and action	Timescale	Success Criteria
We will support the integration and inclusion of Asylum Seekers by commissioning Orientation Programmes to support their inclusion in the City.	Tendering process complete, contract awarded to Red Cross.	Supports the Council's Good Relations Strategy.	Leish Dolan, Good Relations Officer, BCC.	Funding secured.	October 2021 – June 2022.	The delivery of monthly orientation programmes, supported by casework for asylum seekers new to Belfast.
We will support the integration and inclusion of our Roma Community through providing funding for outreach advice clinics.	Funding provided to third sector Partner, Forward South to provide outreach clinics to the Roma Community.	Supports the Council's Good Relations Strategy.	Forward South – Roma Hub.	Funding secured through the Good Relations Action plan.	March 2022 – March 2023	The delivery of monthly outreach and advice clinics on rights and entitlements and signposting to other mainstream services, targeting a minimum of 200 people directly and 500 indirectly through social media information.
We will continue to grow our relationships with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, including refugee and asylum communities, using the Migrant Forum as a network for developing links and enhancing contact between the Council and underrepresented voices.	Continued growth in membership of the Forum Enhanced use of the Forum by other Council services to link with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities.	Complement the Good Relations Strategy.	Leish Dolan, Leish Dolan, Good Relations Officer, BCC.	Staff time.	March 2021 – June 2022.	Growth in Forum Membership Enhanced relationships and networking between organisations between organisations providing services to New Communities.

Case Study: The power of sport in connecting communities

At the start of 2022, individuals from Belfast's many African Communities were preparing to celebrate the African Cup of Nations, an important occasion for the many sporting fans from Africa and people of African heritage that call Belfast home.

Belfast City Council recognised the significance afforded by the Cup of Nations as a unique opportunity to connect communities, celebrate African culture and promote inclusion.

Funding was provided to the [Lower Ormeau Resident's Action Group](#) (LORAG), a local community and voluntary group, to coordinate a festival of sporting, culture, art, and music activities during the Cup of Nations.

The Lower Ormeau area of Belfast is one of the most diverse parts of Belfast and our partners in grass roots community group, LORAG, needed no convincing about the value the festival would have in terms of bring people together and promoting inclusive neighbourhoods.

The project used the unifying power of sport and music, and the importance associated with the African Cup of Nations, to develop a range of events to connect communities and to celebrate officially the inclusion of African culture and communities in Belfast.

The project, delivered over a four-week period, linked new communities with their local neighbourhood facilities and neighbours. A variety of sporting and cultural activities was used to engage communities from all ages and backgrounds. Interactive workshops exploring aspects of black history and heritage, as well as inclusion were organised, using poetry, music, food and sport to open conversations and create meaningful contact. The end of the project coincided with St. Patrick's Day, providing yet another opportunity to share and explore different cultures and heritages.

Konrad Pawlaszek, who organised and led the delivery of the project, noted how the festival 'created new relationships and got people together around a common platform', adding that 'for the African communities living locally, there was a real sense of pride and feeling of inclusion that the city council and ourselves as a grass root community group were celebrating African culture and heritage.'

Fatima Maallin from the [Northern Ireland Somalia Association](#) remarked that 'the activities organised as part of the African Cup of Nations provided a fun and shared celebration of the many African communities living in Belfast. Many within my community were so delighted to see the city council and LORAG provide such recognition to our various African cultures, instilling us with a sense of pride and inclusion within the city.'

INCLUSIVE CITIES

Inclusive Cities is a knowledge exchange initiative supporting UK cities and their local partners to achieve a step-change in their approach towards the inclusion of newcomers.

Drawing on innovative ideas and practices from Europe and the United States, Inclusive Cities aims to support the development of an approach to inclusion which is strategic across the city administration. This approach consistently uses positive messaging to develop an inclusive narrative for the city which informs and drives practice and is local authority led, working in close partnership with business, public and voluntary sector organisations to achieve shared goals.

Inclusive Cities is supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

www.compas.ox.ac.uk/inclusive-cities

THE GLOBAL EXCHANGE ON MIGRATION AND DIVERSITY

The Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity is an ambitious initiative at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), University of Oxford, opening up opportunities for knowledge exchange and longer term collaboration between those working in the migration field.

www.compas.ox.ac.uk/global-exchange



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