

URBAN VILLAGES

# FOCUS MAGAZINE

ISSUE

09

MAY  
2020



COLIN  
**Confidence  
& Connections**

NORTH  
BELFAST  
**Tackling  
Mental Health**

DERRY-  
LONDONDERRY  
**Positive Me**

SOUTH  
BELFAST  
**Kindness  
is Free**

**A Common  
Narrative**  
EASTSIDE

**COVID-19  
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#TogetherApart



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NOTE: All photos in this edition were taken before the COVID-19 crisis emerged.

## About Us



The Urban Villages Initiative is a headline action of the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Strategy. It is designed to improve good relations outcomes and develop thriving places.

The Urban Villages Initiative is shaped and delivered in partnership with local communities and has three core aims:

- To foster positive community identities
- To build community capacity
- To improve the physical environment

The Urban Villages Initiative is continuing to invest in the five areas by supporting organisations in the development of projects aimed at improving the lives of people in these areas.

For more information contact: [info@urbanvillagesni.org](mailto:info@urbanvillagesni.org)

**Front Cover:** Junior Ministers Gordon Lyons and Declan Kearney with Lord Mayor Daniel Baker, representatives from The Executive Office, Dept. for Communities, pupils and teachers from St Colm's High School, and Colin Neighbourhood Partnership at the sod cutting ceremony for the new park in Colin.

# Welcome

It is our pleasure to invite Junior Minister Gordon Lyons and Junior Minister Declan Kearney to write the welcome letter in this latest edition of the Urban Villages Initiative FOCUS Magazine.



## Junior Minister Gordon Lyons

In these uncertain times, it lifts my spirits to see and read about the fantastic work of the communities in Urban Village areas.

I know that most of the stories I am reading about here happened before we were hit by the coronavirus. All the more reason to take the time to reflect on the great achievements of groups and individuals supported by the Urban Villages Initiative.

Recently, I attended the opening of the John Paul II Youth Club capital project. It was a pleasure to meet the leaders and the young people, and they told me how their newly renovated outdoor space is going to have such a positive impact, providing safe, shared space for young people.

I was at the Sod Cutting for the new park in Colin, what an exciting day to see that transformational project underway!

Sadly now, the construction is paused. However, we are committed to getting it back on track as soon as the official advice allows; and the celebration will be all the greater when it is completed.

Urban Village communities are no strangers to adversity, and their resilience is being called upon once more. But we will get through this.

I am looking forward to visiting more projects across the Urban Village areas. In the meantime, I want you to know that we remain committed to working with and supporting you and community organisations through the Urban Villages Initiative.



## Junior Minister Declan Kearney

Firstly, I want to congratulate you, the communities, residents and workers, on the excellent work that I have been reading about in FOCUS Magazine.

I see in these stories communities energised for change, dealing with life's many challenges with such positivity. Working together to form better connections and overcome differences.

The fact is that the stories in this magazine, which precede our current crisis, show how people of all ages are working together to support issues around mental health, building confidence and capacity and sharing kindness, it flows through this publication.

It comes as no surprise then, at this time when we are all under such pressure with the real threat of COVID-19 creating stress and uncertainty in people's lives; that I have seen how groups and organisations have quickly mobilised into direct response mode, reaching out to the most vulnerable, to help them in whatever way they can.

On page 28, we can see some of the many ways groups and organisations have adapted their activities to continue to connect with people and to provide them with arts, culture and learning to help them get through this challenging phase.

We will continue to engage with you and your organisations to support and assess the situation and its fast-changing requirements.

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**URBAN VILLAGE AREAS - Derry-Londonderry: Bogside, Fountain & Bishop Street. South Belfast: Sandy Row, Donegall Pass & The Markets. North Belfast: Ardoyne & Greater Ballysillan. East Belfast: Newtownards Road, Grampian Avenue to Bridge End. West Belfast: Colin Area.**



# Our Generation Programme – Building emotional resilience

**Urban Village areas will benefit from a cross-border and cross-community project that will build positive relations by developing ‘Our Generation’s’ emotional resilience, empathy and understanding.**

A partnership, led by Action Mental Health, has been awarded substantial funding through the European Union’s PEACE IV Programme, to build positive relations and emotional resilience in communities impacted by the Troubles. The PEACE IV Programme is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body.

Match-funding provided by The Executive Office and the Department of Rural and Community Development will see this programme delivered across Urban Village areas and border counties.

**It is expected to reach 35,000 children, young people and adults during the life of the programme.**

Children and young people will take part in the programme design and delivery; providing peer support, developing skills and confidence to improve well-being in their communities. They will act as agents of change, building peace and resilience for future generations.

The Executive Office Junior Ministers Declan Kearney and Gordon Lyons welcomed the investment and the combined focus on mental health and peace building.

Minister Lyons said *“It is an issue which impacts on communities across the region and too many families are struggling or have already lost loved ones. This new project will complement existing community-based initiatives and encourage more joined-up approaches to reach those most in need.”*

Minister Kearney added: *“Communities with a history and ongoing experience of deprivation and social tension are the ones most impacted by the legacy of conflict and division. This project will support meaningful cross-border relationships and build on the good relations focus of the Urban Village Initiative.”*

In the months ahead the project partners will engage with groups and existing projects in Urban Village areas to build on good practice and offer additional assistance.

**For more information on “Our Generation” contact your local Urban Villages coordinator.**



*“Our Generation” is a cross-border partnership project which will be delivered through seven regional organisations - Action Mental Health, Donegal Youth Service, Co-Operation Ireland, Youth Action NI, Youthwork Ireland, Playboard and Ulster University.*





# “Bold + Brilliant” TEDx Stormont Women

**Building on the success of the Urban Villages Talk Like TED youth programme, the Urban Villages Initiative provided masterclass training and the opportunity for women of all ages from Urban Village areas to tell their stories on the TEDxStormont Women’s event stage.**

This was a cross-community intergenerational capacity building programme for women to help them to become more confident in public speaking; to be able to connect with their audiences, develop new ideas and communicate what makes them and their stories unique.

Following the TEDxStormont Women Masterclasses in Belfast and Derry-Londonderry the participants were encouraged to step out of their comfort zone and to pitch their big idea or story at an open mic session at Ulster University.

From these sessions four women were selected from Urban Village areas to speak to an invited audience at the international TEDx Stormont Women’s event in the Great Hall at Parliament Buildings.

Arlene Megaw (EastSide), Annette Burke (Colin), Shauna Quigley (Derry-Londonderry) and Maire Thompson (North), each gave strong and personal talks that were delivered with clarity and authenticity.

A younger participant, 17-year-old, Catriona Walsh, from the previous Talk Like TED youth programme was also selected to speak at the TEDxStormont Women event, where she brilliantly presented a completely new talk!

Speaking following the event in Parliament Buildings, Mark Browne, Director of Strategic Policy, Equality and Good Relations, The Executive Office, said: *“The joint TEDxStormont Women and Urban Villages Initiative programme has been an incredible scheme that has enriched so many of those who live in our Urban Village areas in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. The number of women who have put themselves forward to take part in the masterclasses shows the real appetite in communities for the chance to tell their own stories and share ideas.”*

This programme brought women together on issues and with ideas that were shared and common to them all, there was no place for differences in this forum. The support for one another was evident.

## WATCH THE TEDx Stormont Womens talks here:

▶ Intro video to the TEDx Stormont Women event: <https://youtu.be/nBlzA5luDtg>

▶ Arlene Megaw TEDx Talk: <https://youtu.be/eWEPu9jUL6w>

▶ Annette Burke TEDx Talk: <https://youtu.be/sxpKSFwMSU>

▶ Shauna Quigley TEDx Talk: <https://youtu.be/OB7BN2DIV7w>

▶ Maire Thompson TEDx Talk: <https://youtu.be/Q0uzpEN7cfs>

▶ Catriona Walsh TEDx Talk: <https://youtu.be/dizArAabM7o>



# CRIS Helps Schools to Buddy Up

## Primary schools across the five Urban Village areas continue to 'Buddy Up!'

This programme, delivered by Community Relations in Schools (CRIS), allows pupils, staff and families to meet and build relationships between two school communities.

Since the beginning of this year, CRIS has worked with 16 primary schools to deliver 'Buddy Up!' The pupils have been having fun and making friends while exploring identity, community, empathy and understanding.

Over 170 parents and carers from several of the schools also took part, by discussing and planning ways in which their schools could work together in the future.

One teacher highlighted the importance of the children's ability to *"share with their parents and thus bring the community on board."*

Over 80 children and 40 family members from Mercy PS and Edenbrooke PS attended an upbeat morning at the Houben Centre in North Belfast.

The session was full of songs and activities. At the end of the morning, family members and children made shared art murals for display in the two schools.

The Urban Villages Initiative is investing in the growth of this inter-school Buddy system that will be delivered by CRIS across Primary Schools serving Urban Village areas throughout Belfast and Derry-Londonderry.

## CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

### STAY AT HOME



**At times like this you need to know that the information you are getting is from trusted sources, we will help you with this\*.**

**Community Helpline** - a freephone helpline to help those in vulnerable groups to access information & advice in relation to COVID-19 is open 9.00 am to 5.00pm, seven days a week  
 Freephone number: **0808 802 0020**;  
 email: **covid19@adviceni.net**;  
 text: **ACTION to 81025**

**Looking after your mental health and wellbeing** - The helpline is confidential, free and open 24 hours every day - contact Lifeline for advice - telephone **0808 808 8000**

NI Direct COVID-19 information - **<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-home-and-self-isolation>**

STAY AT HOME - NHS video - **<https://youtu.be/VgUJzIZDtQE>** (with sign language)

\*If you have a particular query email us on [info@urbanvillagesni.org](mailto:info@urbanvillagesni.org) and we will do our best to connect you with the right source of information. #BetterTogetherApart [@urbanvillageni](https://twitter.com/urbanvillageni)



Colin

## WEST BELFAST



# Profile: Eileen Wilson Footprints Women's Centre

**Eileen Wilson has been living in the Colin area for 35 years and responding to the changing needs of women in the local community, she embarked on a journey with Footprints Women's Centre 22 years ago.**

Recognising increasing levels of food poverty in the Colin area, with more people needing to access foodbanks. As Food Service Manager, Eileen helped develop a range of services at Footprints including cookery programmes, catering services and a food garden.

In 2017, Eileen oversaw the Department for Communities support the opening of the first social supermarket in N. Ireland at Footprints Women's Centre; this milestone event made it possible for local people to provide for their families in a dignified way.

More recently, Eileen was instrumental in securing further funding from the Urban Villages Initiative that would not only double the size of the social supermarket but also improve facilities in the centre.

Eileen also leads a programme with a group of Syrian women whose families have made the Colin area their home. Supported by an Urban Villages Capacity Building Programme they have helped these families to integrate into the local community, engaging with local women and taking part in a range of weekly food, music and dance classes.

Eileen recently successfully completed a Social Enterprise Programme Diploma, supported by the Urban Villages Initiative at Ulster University. The Business Plan she developed during the course will be used directly for the further development of the Social Supermarket at Footprints.

Eileen's personal journey is impressive, not only is she a leading light in making life better for women; she is a grand-mother with influence, and for her to graduate with her Diploma from Ulster University was a very special day. With four generations of family surrounding her to

celebrate, she showed that it's never too late to proudly wear that gown and mortar board!

Footprints Women's Centre provides a safe place for all women, builds confidence and gives them the support they need to improve the quality of their lives; something that Eileen takes great delight in being a part of helping each individual's journey.



# Building Confidence and Connections - Ionad na Faiseoige



**As part of a number of confidence building and practical skills activities including sewing, crafts and art; groups at Ionad na Faiseoige have worked to produce artwork, which are now proudly displayed at home and in the centre.**

**Some of the budding artists had never held a paint brush before they joined our group, and now their work is truly amazing.**

Groups come together to learn new skills with a qualified tutor to support them.

Getting together always involves having a cup of tea and a chat, and many new friendships have blossomed.

### **What else do we do?**

**Upcycling:** Fewer clothes are being thrown out since our sewing group are now proficient in patching, hemming and sewing on buttons. Outgrown baby clothes have become beautiful baby blankets, quilts for the cold winter nights and picnic blankets for summer days.

**Repurposing:** We fold old books and make them into beautiful gifts for Mother's Day, birthdays and other occasions. Quilling is the latest craze; this simple craft of rolling paper has transformed handmade greetings cards and other items.

It's about getting people out of the house, socialising, engaging, talking. Often these are women who are alone can be on high doses of medication. The classes have helped some to reduce medication, and once they take a starter class to get them out of the house and involved, they will often get interested in other classes.

This capacity building programme reaches women with little or no social contact. The programme is tackling isolation by giving women the opportunity to learn new skills, to connect with other women, building confidence, feeling valued and better able to cope with life's challenges.

There is something for everyone. Call in and have a look and maybe try your hand. You will definitely surprise yourself.

*"I can't believe I have a wee blanket out of all her first-born clothes. It's amazing and I did it myself."*

*"The dark nights aren't so bad now that I can pass my time folding books. Everybody thinks I'm great. I can do things now that nobody else I know can do."*

*"I hated school and was no good at anything. I'm not great at art but I love the company and the tea break. I love going to the group and having friends there."*

*"I go to activities 5 days a week. It is great me time and then I go home and sort out the family."*



# Safer Streets in Colin

Holiday periods can sometimes prove a testing time for youth, community and statutory agencies. We have seen a significant rise in on-street alcohol related anti-social behaviour and low-level criminality right across the Belfast council area.

However, in the last few years, thanks to the “On Street” coordinated Safer Streets approach in Colin, supported by Urban Villages Initiative, this trend is receding significantly, with all partners involved reporting a very positive improvement.

The Safer Streets programme supported a wide range of diversionary activities including, boxercise, pool & snooker competitions, nail & beauty workshops, extra drop-in sessions. The “Hugh Brannigan” Cup, a cross-community annual soccer event, hosted at Sally Gardens 3G pitch, welcomed teams from across Belfast and beyond.



This year, supported by parents, over 200 young boys and girls took part, many coming into the Colin area for the first time.

Teams taking part included The Doyle, Short Strand, Glentoran Boys, Celtic Boys Poleglass, Ards Youth, Aquinas Ormeau Road and Ballymena Youth, with ages ranging from 8-13, it was an extremely successful event.



## TEDx Stormont Women – Bold and Brilliant

**Annette Burke,**  
 Photographer and  
 EFT Master Practitioner  
 Colin Urban Village area  
**Talk: Imperfect Me  
 to “This is me”**

Annette Burke is an award winning photographer. Annette’s own body image challenges empowered her to train to become a Master

Practitioner of EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique) through which she helps clients to manage and overcome emotional obstacles to health.

She marries her passions for photography and EFT in her Boudoir Photography sessions, designed to encourage women to connect with their Bold and Brilliant selves.

 TEDx Stormont Women – Bold and Brilliant  
<https://youtu.be/sxpKSFwMMSU>

Bogside, Fountain & Bishop Street

# DERRY~ LONDONDERRY



# Streets Alive: Adapting to serve the community



The Streets Alive programme has rapidly adapted its activities to continue to serve the Urban Villages communities at this time of the COVID-19 crisis, when it is no longer possible to roll out the planned programme of public events.

A series of Facebook live events have been promoted and produced across social media to engage and encourage people doing the right thing, by staying at home.

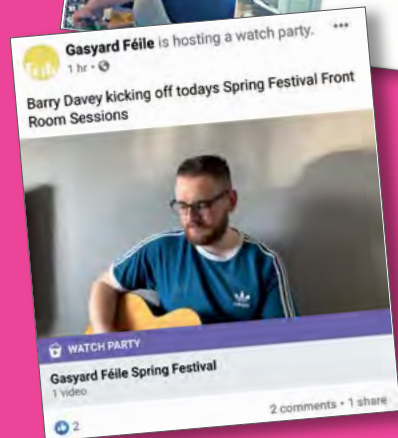
Events delivered to screens at home include; music and dance tuition and performance, language classes, cooking, fitness and many other activity classes. These are all available on the Gasyard Wall Féile Facebook page.

If you need any further support or need to contact any local organisations in the Derry-Londonderry Urban Village area there are some useful contacts below:

Dove House provide a range of services including benefit advice, unemployment support and debt advice. Contact Dove House by telephone: **028 7126 9327**

Follow New Gate Arts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram or check out [www.newgatearts.com](http://www.newgatearts.com) for updates, online events and helpful advice.

Check out Bogside & Brandywell Health Forum for classes, programmes, nutrition, guidance and information on Facebook or email [info@bbhealthforum.org](mailto:info@bbhealthforum.org)



## NEW to Streets Alive - The Zephyr Festival

The Streets Alive Zephyr (wind of the west) Festival was brought together online and celebrated the shared Traditions and Wind Instruments of Ireland, Ulster Scots, Bulgaria and Catalonia.

Four masters of their instruments presented their own music in showcase form as well as delivering contained master class presentations and workshops on their particular instrument, including: Uilleann Pipes, Gaida and Kaval, Highland Bagpipes and Catalanian Bagpipes.

A youth cultural exchange ran along with the concert preparations, bringing together young nationals from these regions currently based in Northern Ireland.

The young people prepared tunes from their own traditional repertoire as well as exchanging prepared pieces from each of the others culture.





## PROFILE: Paddy Danagher, Streets Alive Coordinator One year on...

**From the outset I couldn't believe the community spirit that existed in the Urban Village area, it was a shining example of how collaboration works for the benefit of all.**

So many activities and events, all for the community and wider area. With every passing month I have witnessed the passion and care that is present amongst the many organisations collaborating in the Streets Alive programme. Before I took up the post, a lot of the media coverage I saw about the area was negative.

How wrong such coverage was, when it comes to caring for issues affecting the local communities.

We meet to explore all that is good about culture and the arts, how we can improve health and wellbeing, bring the streets to life, and support each other.

No doubt there are many challenging issues but the residents and workers in these communities are to be commended. They come to work each day with only one thing on the mind - How can we help today.

What a great community, people and organisations with big hearts and a delight to work with, which makes my job so enjoyable.

## Positive Me

This is a 6-week programme delivered in primary schools within the Urban Village area, Positive Me concentrates on educating the kids about mental health.

What is mental health? The kids explore their feelings and emotions and how they can affect their mental health. They look at healthy and unhealthy relationships, empowering resilience in relationship building.

This programme gives the kids the tool kit to deal with situations that may cause them stress or anxiety. It educates them on how they can seek help and it teaches them coping mechanisms, on how they can help themselves.

During the course of the programme they do some gardening. They plant their own flowers to look after throughout the school year. They are responsible for nurturing the plants and giving them the attention that they need to flourish.

They also take part in a 'cook-it' session where they look at the foods they are eating and how their gut health is directly linked to their mental health.



This is the first year that this programme has been delivered and it has proved very popular. Corey, a teacher at the Gaelscoil said,

*"Although the resilience programme has come to an end for me this term, the children still talk about how much they enjoyed the afterschool club provided for them. They have put together a production and will be demonstrating said production at the end of the term.*

*The children's literacy has much improved due to the Resilience Programme and their self-confidence has grown greatly. The children's talking and listening skills have made massive improvement and this has been noted by other members of staff also. I think the resilience club is a fantastic resource for all members here in school."*

## Pink Ladies Legacy Project

**The Pink Ladies are based in Derry-Londonderry and provide a range of Cancer support services for women, men and children affected by cancer across the Derry City and Strabane District Council area, Limavady and Coleraine.**

Thirteen participants from the Pink Ladies group took part in a six-week course exploring legacy and memory through the medium of photography. The group explored examples of how photography, film, audio and journaling can be used therapeutically in their daily lives.

Using a variety of approaches, including using disposable cameras, participants created imagery around the theme legacy. They designed photobooks, albums, slideshows, film and framed prints. The work is displayed in an exhibition in the Gasyard Centre.

Members of the Pink Ladies come from across the Derry-Londonderry Urban Village area and are focused on building strong community relations. The group are based in the Gasyard Centre with a Community HUB in Creggan. The service operates across all 5 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas in Derry City & Strabane District Council area and Causeway Coast and Glens areas.



## Building Opportunity and Connectivity - Training Together

Skills North West delivered high level Health and Safety Training (NEBOSH\* qualification). There was huge interest when this course was advertised last year, and it was heavily oversubscribed.

Working with employers on this training programme meant there was a real prospect of jobs for participants on the successful completion of this course. However, either way, this is an excellent qualification to have, which will open up job opportunities in the Health and Safety industry.

The participants on the course ranged in age from 20 – 60 years, and they came from a wide range of backgrounds, all people who lived in, or had strong connections with, the Urban Village area.

Fantastic friendships developed between all of those who took part, it is what building community relations is all about. This course has the potential to literally change people's lives and we are very grateful to the Urban Villages Initiative for enabling us to put this in place.

\*National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health

## TEDx Stormont Women



**Shauna Quigley**  
Therapist, Advocate and Pioneer  
Derry-Londonderry Urban Village area  
**Talk: Healing Trauma: New Paradigm Letting the Body Inform the Mind**

Shauna is the Founder and Director of Wellnesseeeker, an online school that offers a variety of programmes, aimed directly at supporting mental and emotional difficulties.

Shauna is passionate about the potential of the human spirit to heal and is convinced that everyone has the capacity to transform their suffering.

She is a tireless advocate for better mental and emotional health models and she provides services nationally while continuing to educate herself on current policies and developments.

Shauna is currently working in clinical practice one on one, and through workshops she brings her healing work to people everywhere.

 TEDx Stormont Women: <https://youtu.be/OB7BN2DIV7w>




**Catriona Walsh**  
Deputy Head of School  
at St Mary's College  
Derry-Londonderry Urban Village area  
**Talk: Growing Up Having to Learn How to Be a "Girl"**

Catriona participated in the Talk Like TED youth programme supported by the Urban Villages Initiative. Following a series of workshops, Catriona, along with a group of young people from Urban Village areas presented their talks at a Talk Like TED event in the Long Gallery at Stormont.

On completing the Talk like TED programme, Catriona was selected to present on the main TEDx Stormont Women stage. Catriona developed a new talk and delivered it perfectly in front of a packed audience of influencers and decision makers in Parliament Buildings.

In this talk Catriona shares her experience of early childhood adversity and how simple daily actions can change someone's whole life around.

 TEDx Stormont Women: <https://youtu.be/dizArAabM7o>



Urban Villages Initiative in EastSide

## EAST BELFAST

# Different Voices Shape a Story

### The EastSide Voices Conflict Tours is not what you might expect!

This community led tourism project takes you beyond the conflict and reveals different stories and interpretations. It forms part of a wider strategic cross-cutting approach to tourism within EastSide and other Urban Village areas across Belfast and Derry-Londonderry.

The Urban Villages Initiative has facilitated wider collaboration and support from partner organisations. Ulster University, National Museums NI and EastSide Tourism have played an important part in a capacity building programme around tourism.

The project's partnership approach has brought together Charter NI (lead partner), Short Strand Community Forum, Ballymac Friendship Centre and The Andy Tyrie Centre to deliver this peace tourism initiative within the East Belfast Urban Village area.

The collaboration of cross community partner organisations showcases the local peace and reconciliation process and puts local culture, heritage and history at the forefront of the regeneration of East Belfast.

Tours of the local area focus on specific aspects of social, historical and political history. The partner groups have together shaped a common narrative around the impact of the 'Troubles' on the life of their community, while maintaining their own unique perspective.

**Local people trained as tour guides provide opportunities to share stories from different community perspectives.**

The project partners have developed an online booking platform and social media presence and are now preparing to market the tours to tourists and visitors to Belfast.

▶ EastSide Voices Film: <https://youtu.be/vUQ8k5sdmWI>



# New Hosford Health and Wellbeing Hub



**East Belfast Mission (EBM) has led the development of 'The Hosford Health and Wellbeing Hub' in a shop unit in the Skainos Centre on the Newtownards Road.**

The project promotes and supports the physical and mental health & wellbeing of a diverse group of participants who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness along with local residents; in an inclusive and shared community space.

The hub has provided an amazing venue to host a wide range of project activities, weekly 'drop in' sessions and horticultural therapy sessions in the nearby community garden.

Several events have been hosted in the hub already, including celebration meals with music and a quiz for local residents. They enjoyed delicious Sudanese and Caribbean food cooked by some of the project participants currently residing in the EBM Homeless hostel.

Project participants also visited the Armagh Planetarium, the MAC Theatre and went shopping together.



**Exploring the importance of community through group activities, learning new skills, preparing and eating meals together has helped to develop improved good relations between project participants and local residents.**



# Feel Good with Food

Food poverty is a significant issue in the EastSide Urban Village area. East Belfast Enterprise set up 'Feel Good with Food' in partnership with Vital Nutrition and the Orchardville Society. They provide nutritional advice and practical guidance on how to prepare healthy, nutritious meals with readily accessible and cost-effective ingredients to improve health.

The project has been delivered from the new Foundry Training Café that has been recently developed through the Urban Villages capital programme. Community outreach sessions, focused on activities with marginalised and vulnerable groups in the local community, that is low-income families, elderly people and minority groups.

To date a total of 139 participants from a wide range of community backgrounds have attended a number of workshops. The workshops covered a range of health and nutritional advice and addressed issues



such as Eating for Energy, Vital Nutrition for Families, familiarisation with "what's on your plate" for children, Vital Nutrition for Older People, Healthy Fats, 5 a Day, Antioxidants, Focus on Sugar, Portion Sizes, blood pressure and cardiovascular health.

*"Fakeaways - the healthy alternative to takeaway food".*

For more information contact Jonathan McAlpin by email: [Jonathan@eastbelfast.org](mailto:Jonathan@eastbelfast.org)



## TEDx Stormont Women

**Arlene Megaw** (EastSide) Homeless Advocate, Environmentalist, Arts Facilitator  
**Topic:** The "What do you think" approach

Arlene Megaw has worked at Hosford Homeless Hostel since 2007 as a Life skills Co-ordinator. She co-ordinates a Health and Wellbeing Team delivering a programme of Horticulture and Art Therapy to those most marginalised in society. With a background in counselling and community

development Arlene has developed partnerships with other East Belfast Community Projects transforming her local community.

*"I highly recommend others in the Urban Village groups to grasp this opportunity to tell their story. I'm usually the person who introduces the speaker, but this time "I felt the fear, and did it", and feeling a great sense of achievement afterwards."*

▶ TEDx Stormont Women <https://youtu.be/eWEPu9jUL6w>

Ardoyne &  
Greater Ballysillan

## NORTH BELFAST

SUPPORTED BY  
**URBAN  
VILLAGES  
INITIATIVE**  
SUPPORTED BY

# Healthy Active Living for Families

**Benview Community Centre's Healthy Active Living for Families has worked with parents and their children to improve health outcomes for the whole family.**



Centre Manager Kelly Harrison explained: *'Staff had noticed that anxiety issues prevented many of the parents from going places with their children. Looking at triggers that affect their well-being has brought noticeable changes.'*

*'It teaches you how to breathe, relax. You pass it on to your children.'* said Lauren about the mindfulness training.

Caroline Houston, the coordinator, told us: *'Parents meet twice a week, on Thursday with a crèche for younger children. They've been learning about challenging behaviours, baby brain stimulation, sensory and messy play, healthy eating on a budget...on Wednesday the children's focus on sports, cooking and imaginative play. It is such a positive programme!'*

We chatted with some of the mothers. Lauren's highlight was First Aid; *'it was practical and it really helps in day to day life.'*

Kathleen enjoyed the historical Belfast bus tour: *'I learnt a lot about other communities. I want to do more cross-community cultural tours.'*

Lauren found ASD training invaluable: *'I have a daughter with autism. It helps me understand her better, give her new ways of coping' and Kathleen said behaviour training helped her manage her child's angers, 'especially learning from other parents.'*

Alex and Tanya both said they would be lost without the group. Kelly added: *'because it's been a long-term project, participants have become close, they trust and support each other.'*



## PROFILE: Mark McKenzie Path to Employment Programme

**Mark McKenzie, 26-years old from Sunningdale, North Belfast, is delighted to have found a job with support from the Path to Employment (P2E) programme, a European Social Fund project match funded by the Urban Villages Initiative and Belfast City Council.**

After years of trying to get into paid employment, and having qualified from a short





## BATS on the Road

**Newly qualified community transport drivers for the Ballysillan - Ardoyne Transport System (BATS) bring with them more opportunity to get the BATS buses on the road serving the community across Ardoyne and Ballysillan.**

Ardoyne Youth Enterprise and Ballysillan Community Forum continue to roll out

their minibus driver training programme, skilling up youth and community workers to acquire the new D1 Minibus driving licence.

Changes to the laws for minibus driver licensing has made it increasingly difficult for schools, youth groups and community organisations

to service their users' needs without paying costly private transport companies.

With support from the Urban Villages Initiative, four people have passed their D1 driving tests, and another four are underway. Seven local people have also completed the Minibus and Driver Assistant programme.

This driver training support is proving invaluable by helping community groups to provide affordable transport solutions for their activities through the emerging BATS service.

Two BATS buses move across the north Belfast Urban Village area serving the community needs. The Urban Villages Initiative funded the buses.

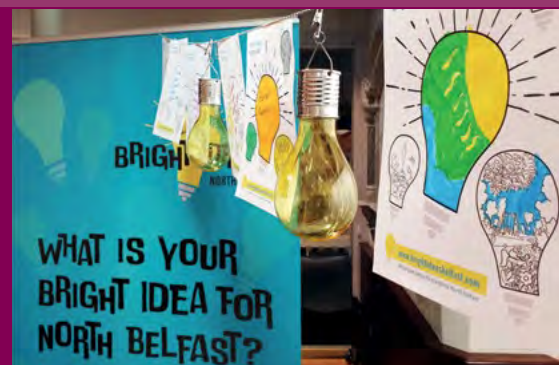
## Bright Ideas North Belfast

**The Urban Villages Initiative supported Bright Ideas North Belfast, a Public Health Agency initiative run by Urban Scale Interventions (USI)**

The aim of the project was to collect and share 'bright ideas' for North Belfast through creative conversations and engagement. All the ideas collected were hung on the bright idea teepee on the Junction of Woodvale Road and Crumlin Road around which cultural events are taking place.

Visit [www.brightideasbelfast.com](http://www.brightideasbelfast.com) to vote and share your favourite ideas. The ideas with the most votes from the community will be taken forward to a judging panel and the best ideas will be realised.

If you would like to share your ideas, get in touch with Cathal Tunney at - [cathal@urbanscaleinterventions.com](mailto:cathal@urbanscaleinterventions.com).



Hospitality programme at Workforce, he joined P2E to get support in finding a job with the help of mentor Marty Tabb.

Like many, Mark faced a number of common barriers to getting a job; his lack of confidence and having no previous paid experience. Mark decided that housekeeping was his direction as he was

happy to work alone or as part of a small team.

Marty, suggested work experience at The Lansdowne Hotel, a partner of the P2E programme. The Hotel offered Mark a placement with Events Coordinator, Jeanette Green. Jeanette liaised with P2E to ensure that Mark was happy with all aspects of his training.

At the end of the work experience, the Hotel were delighted with Mark's work and offered him a part time job. Mark couldn't be happier, and would like to thank the hotel staff and the P2E programme for helping him achieve his goal.



# Supporting mental health and well-being initiatives

North Belfast has been deeply affected by recent tragic events linked to mental health issues, but community organisations in the Urban Villages area have rallied round to step up their work on mental health and wellbeing.

### Recent events included:

- Information and support sessions in local youth clubs and R-City
- Ardoyne Youth Club leafleting its neighbourhood with information on crisis support helplines
- Mental health champions coffee morning in Mercy College with YEHA (Youth Education Health Advice)
- Streetbeat Youth Centre's work with young men at Boys' Model during Children's Mental Health Week
- Women's Tec Mind Your Head information session for women



### The Urban Villages Initiative supports ongoing mental health and well-being programmes, including:

- Healthy living initiatives in both Ardoyne and Ballysillan
- The joint Youth Access programme by New Life Counselling and Jigsaw Community Counselling, which fast-tracks young people to counselling services
- Carezone in Schools, a peer mentoring partnership between Streetbeat, Yeha, Mercy College and Girls Model. Carezone in Schools was recently nominated for the Aisling Awards Urban Villages Ambassadors award

A list of useful helplines is available on [helplinesni.com](http://helplinesni.com).

- Lifeline has a 24 hour service: **0808 808 8000**.
- PIPS Charity, based on the Antrim Road, can be contacted on **028 9080 5850**.
- To refer young people to the Youth Access Programme, contact New Life Counselling **028 90391630**, or Jigsaw **028 9543 8166**.



## TEDx Stormont Women – Bold and Brilliant

**Maire Thompson**  
 North Belfast  
 Principal and Educator  
**Talk: It takes a village to raise a child**

Maire Thompson has been involved in teaching for 23 years. After some early childhood adversity Maire went on to win the UK Head teacher of the Year in 2017

and went on to judge the competition in 2019.

Her approach is based on a strong moral compass and a core belief in the positive potential of education. She recognizes there is talent in every child and sees the teachers' role as helping to draw out and encourage this talent.

 [TEDx Stormont Women – Bold and Brilliant https://youtu.be/Q0uzpEN7cfs](https://youtu.be/Q0uzpEN7cfs)



Sandy Row,  
Donegall Pass  
& the Markets

## SOUTH BELFAST

# Young men 'Take 5 Steps' to Wellbeing

*"The highlights for me were the empathy the young men showed when competing in wheelchair basketball, recognising the challenges they would face if they were in a similar position. The team work, the growth in confidence to talk to strangers to find out stories about their own city and how others see things differently."*  
Jonny Simms, Belfast South Community Resources (BSCR)

Young people from all three neighbourhoods across the South Belfast Urban Village area, the Markets, Donegall Pass and Sandy Row, took part in the 'Take 5 steps to wellbeing in 5 days' programme. The young men (ages 14-18) learned about the important role that this approach can play in promoting emotional wellbeing in their daily lives.

This project is a follow on to a previous successful wellbeing project called L.A.D. Talk (Lads Against Depression). L.A.D. Talk started in response to the emotional stress young men that attended a study support club faced coming up to exam time.

Young men at Belfast South Community Resource Centre (BSCR) tried a range of activities that were based around the 5 steps to wellbeing:

- Give,
- Active,
- Connect,
- Keep Learning
- Take Notice

The activities included, conquering fears on high ropes, creating plant potters for the local school, a wellbeing discovery tour of Belfast, wheelchair basketball and a lot more!

The young men not only got to work with people from different areas but also got to try a range of activities and foods that they wouldn't normally have the opportunity to do.

Reece MCombe - *"I enjoyed trying different activities and experiencing things that I wouldn't normally get to do. It is also good to be able to give something back to the local community through the pallets project which will be given to local residents."*

Rio Morrison - *"Being part of this project has helped me to improve my social skills through meeting and talking to new people from outside my own area. This has given me confidence to try new things, I've even eaten food I wouldn't have eaten before."*





Sandy Row,  
Donegall Pass  
& the Markets

**SOUTH BELFAST**



# We are Incredibly Proud...

**The Youth Action Partnership (YAP) programme brings together South Belfast Alternatives, The Charter Youth Club and St. Malachy's Youth Centre.**

The leadership shown by the Gareth Hughes, William (Barley) Robinson and Eddie Burns in bringing the communities and young people of Donegall Pass, Sandy Row and the Market areas of South Belfast together has been a fantastic achievement in itself.

Through effective partnership working they have nurtured the learning and achievements that the young people in these communities have gained through active participation. They have built relationships, become friends with each other and broken down the barriers that have often divided them - we are incredibly proud of this achievement.

The partnership has taken a cohesive approach to tackling a diverse range of emerging needs and issues effecting young people and the community such as mental health, anti-social behaviour, internet safety, anti-bullying, hate crime and arranged fighting.

*"For me as a long-time community youth worker in Sandy Row, it fills me with hope for the future as I have seen first-hand the work YAP has done with the young people.*

*YAP has built up trust with the 3 communities, the young people have participated in so many developmental learning programmes that encourage relationship and friendship building and personal growth and development."*

William (Barley) Robinson  
Sandy Row Community/  
youth worker

*"By participating on the YAP programme it has opened up opportunities for our members to gain new experiences, obtain accredited qualifications on programmes/ subjects that will benefit them and wider society as a whole.*

*It has also helped not only the participants but also St. Malachy's to build positive working relationships with those living and working across Donegall Pass and Sandy Row as well as other statutory agencies working within our communities that historically would not have previously happened before"*

Eddie Burns,  
St. Malachy's Youth Centre

*"The success of YAP is attributed to the genuine partnership between Charter YC, St. Malachy's and Alternatives but also to the support we receive from the Urban Villages team - a partnership that enables young people to reach their full potential as positive influencers and active citizens across South Belfast"*

Gareth Hughes,  
Project Co-ordinator,  
South Belfast Alternatives



# Kindness is Free... Sprinkle it Everywhere!

At the Sólás Kids Support Den in the South Belfast Urban Village area an educational support programme helps the children to learn about kindness.

The importance of kindness is a year-round focus at the Kids Support Den, and over recent uncertain times it has been at the forefront of our minds. The children have been working together to create some amazing posters to share the importance of kindness with others.

Working together on this topic has taught the children that despite coming from a diverse range of backgrounds they all have the same little issues, dreams and aspirations. They all have the ability to love and they all have the gift of



kindness inside, which they are giving to everyone despite the colour of their skin or their religion.

The wonderful children that attend the Sólás Kids Den have hope that their shared dream of a world full of love and kindness can be ignited within us all - and that although they may be little, their BIG message will be shared widely in the hopes of building a more positive future for us all.



## A Trip to the Farm Helped Us to be Kinder

On a trip to Streamvale Open Farm we showed kindness to each other and to the animals.

Feeding the deer made us remember to be gentle, cuddling puppies reminded us to share and the time together as a group reminded us of the importance of having each other around, as it just wouldn't have been as much fun without all of our friends.

# Building Projects on Pause

Due to the COVID-19 emergency, along with our partners, we are following government guidelines to undertake social distancing and stay at home rules. Therefore, projects have been paused until it is possibly to resume normal working conditions.

You can be assured that we are committed to working with you to continue to create thriving places through building projects in Urban Village areas when construction is able to resume.

We will continue to work collaboratively with our partners across departments, councils and community on a range of building projects that aim to improve the physical environment in Urban Village areas across Belfast and Derry-Londonderry.

In the meantime, work keeps going across many home offices to progress plans and processes, so that we are as ready as possible to go when the green light is given.

The capital projects are connected with the good relations programmes to support and complement local activity for the benefit of people living, working and visiting Urban Village areas.

To date across the five Urban Village areas 41 capital projects have been completed and 96 projects are currently progressing through the various stages of the capital development lifecycle.

Planning and work continue across the Urban Villages team, any concerns contact us at [info@urbanvillagesni.org](mailto:info@urbanvillagesni.org)



## Sneak Preview of the New Grace Family Centre

**Construction of the new Grace Family Centre on Alliance Avenue in the North Belfast Urban Village area is at an advanced stage.**

The purpose-built, £2.1M two-storey centre will provide childcare for up to 60 children, a counselling suite, a multi-functional training suite, a café and office space.

It will also be the new permanent home for Grace Women's Development Limited, which has provided vital services for women and their families in the area since 1984. The Grace Women's organisation will offer a wider range of learning and training opportunities that promote personal development, health and wellbeing.

Department for Communities Minister, Deirdre Hargey, joined Cllr Brian Kingston and Ciaran McGurk Head of the Urban Villages Capital team, for a sneak preview of the new building.

This new centre will have a huge impact on the lives of local women and their families when it opens.

Minister Hargey said: "This new facility will be vital for this community by enabling them to build on their success to date and offer a wider range of services which will benefit local women, their families and the wider community."

Belfast City Council has invested £1.4M in the new state-of-the-art facility, with £553,000 funding coming from the Department for Communities (DfC) and a further £145,000 investment from the Urban Villages Initiative.





The 'Leap of Faith' sculpture - developed in 2010 by the local community in partnership with school children reflects the aspirational leap from adolescence into adulthood - will be relocated to become a prominent feature at the entrance of the new park.

## £5m Park Project will Create Shared Space for all

**There was much to celebrate as work began on a new £5 million destination park on the Stewartstown Road in the Colin Urban Village area.**

The sod cutting ceremony was attended by Junior Minister Declan Kearney, Junior Minister Gordon Lyons and the Lord Mayor of Belfast.

There was a great community turn out for the event including students from St Colm's High School, who had contributed to the poetry and artwork on the new park hoarding; and members of the East Belfast Men's Shed joined the celebration with their friends from the local Colin's Men's Shed.

Junior Minister Kearney said: *"This new park will be a fantastic facility that will deliver something for everyone. This £5 million investment under The Executive Office's Urban Villages Initiative will incorporate a play area for younger children, an event space, a nature education area and a youth zone.*

*There is a diverse local community ready and waiting to enjoy this fantastic new park, which will be a safe, shared space - a place for everyone to enjoy."*

Junior Minister Lyons said: *"Along with other capital projects completed or still in development across the area, the Urban Villages Initiative is investing in creating shared, welcoming spaces.*

*"This new park provides an opportunity to build on and develop new friendships with people from all backgrounds through a range of diverse and inclusive activities, bringing people together locally, across Belfast and further afield, in this new quality park environment."*

The project is being delivered in partnership with Belfast City Council on land transferred to the local authority by the Department for Communities.

Communities Minister Deirdre Hargey said: *"The new park will provide an exciting location to host and facilitate cross community and good relations programmes. It sounds like it will be a fun, educational and welcoming place that will become a real community hub."*

Speaking at the sod cutting ceremony, Lord Mayor of Belfast, Cllr Daniel Baker said: *"I am delighted to see work get under way on this new destination public park in the Colin area. When it opens next year, it will be an extremely valuable addition to the local community. I hope the new park will attract many people to the area who may not have previously visited."*





## Fantastic New Outdoor Space John Paul II Youth Club

**A new outdoor space at John Paul II Youth Club has been officially opened in the North Belfast Urban Village area by Junior Ministers and the Lord Mayor of Belfast.**

The space has been completely transformed from what was an unattractive, disused area into a unique sports and arts facility that will support a variety of activities for young people.

The regenerated space supports an enhanced programme of activities giving participants a positive forum to help work through some of the most challenging issues facing young people living in the North Belfast Urban Village area.

Junior Minister Kearney said: *“John Paul II Youth Club has been supporting young people since 1979 and I am delighted to see them going from strength to strength in this new era.*

*“Following this investment from the Urban Villages Initiative, local young people now have an exceptional outdoor space for activities. The project provides opportunities to improve physical & mental health and*

*wellbeing and also to develop and facilitate cross-community sporting activities with other groups from the area.”*

Junior Minister Lyons said: *“This project, which has been supported by The Executive Office through the Urban Villages Initiative, will have a positive impact on local youth and their families by providing a safe, shared space for young people to come together and engage in a wide range of activities provided by the youth club.*

*“This unique space is an excellent example of how through working closely with community we can really make a difference to improving young people’s lives by providing a safe healthy environment to connect and learn.”*

The project was delivered by Belfast City Council on behalf of the Urban Villages Initiative. Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Daniel Baker, said: *“I very much welcome this joint investment by the Urban Villages Initiative and Council through our Local Investment Fund in this superb upgrade to the grounds at John Paul II Youth Club.”*

Owen Maguire, Chair of John Paul II Youth Club said: *“This new outdoor space will greatly enrich our community through promoting healthy lifestyles and it will build self-confidence with the young people who use the facilities here. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Urban Villages Initiative and Belfast City Council for their support on this project.”*







## Growing Colin Allotments and Healthy Living Centre

**An upgrade to the Colin Allotments and Healthy Living Centre in West Belfast has been officially unveiled by Junior Minister Declan Kearney and the Lord Mayor.**

The investment of £90,000 has delivered improved functionality and accessibility at the Healthy Living Centre. Junior Minister Kearney and the Lord Mayor enjoyed joining pupils from Oakwood Integrated Primary School at a nutrition and horticultural class on the day.

Junior Minister Kearney said: *“This investment in the Colin Allotments by the Urban Villages Initiative has enabled Colin Neighbourhood Partnership [CNP] to increase the number of people using these fantastic facilities.*

*“It is a great opportunity for young people and adults of all backgrounds and all abilities to come here and learn how to improve their own health and mental well-being through good, healthy food and getting outdoors.”*

The facility offers horticultural courses and cookery classes and is used by schools, Men’s Shed groups and public bodies to support innovative approaches to health and well-being and community engagement. The Urban Villages Initiative supports programmes that offer nutrition and gardening courses to primary schools.

The Colin Allotments is an important community asset used by both the Colin community and people from outside the area. Children from schools across the Colin and North Belfast Urban Village areas visit the site weekly.

Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Daniel Baker, said: “In my time as a local councillor in the Colin area, I have got to know just how popular the Colin Allotments are amongst the local community and I know that these improvements will make a big difference to the individuals and groups who use them. I’m therefore delighted to attend today’s event to help officially mark their completion.”

Annie Armstrong from CNP said: *“The numbers attending activities at the allotments had hit a peak, so we are extremely grateful that the Urban Villages Initiative agreed to support this enhancement project. This has enabled us to continue to work with even more children from primary schools, young people from local youth services and people from a wide range of other organisations.”*

The capital upgrade project was delivered by Belfast City Council on behalf of The Executive Office’s Urban Villages Initiative.



# Building Projects Update

## IMPORTANT NEWS UPDATE:

Due to the COVID-19 emergency all active Urban Villages capital projects have been paused as construction companies have left the sites under Government guidance.

We look forward to projects getting up and running again as soon as official advice allows and, in the meantime, here is some information about projects at their different stages.



## Sacred Heart Parish Hall at Marrowbone Community Association

*Community Partner: Marrowbone Community Association*

Supported by the Department of Education, this is the restoration and redevelopment of a former parochial hall into a thriving mixed-use community facility, which includes youth facilities and outdoor space.

In a TEO collaboration the Social Investment Fund (SIF) has supported this Urban Villages capital project by providing planting and fit-out of outdoor space where participants can grow plants and vegetables in raised beds.

*Delivery Partner: Belfast City Council*

*Status: On-site*



## Short Strand Community Centre Sensory Play Park, Classroom and Cultural Tourism project

*Community Partner: Short Strand Community Forum*

Recently an outdoor play facility and classroom for children that attend the creche and after school's club has been completed. It facilitates play programmes for children from across different sections of the community.

The tourism exhibition capital project is ready to start on site. It will focus on the local social and cultural history and will be part of the EastSide Voices Walking Tours.

*Delivery Partner: Belfast City Council*

*Status: Part Complete*



## Blythefield Primary School

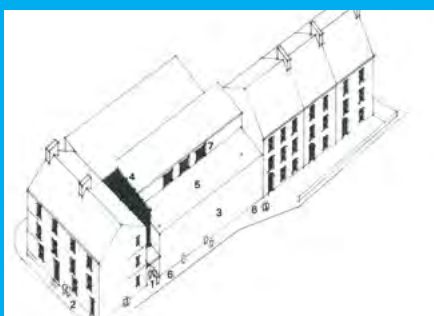
*Community Partner: Blythefield Primary School*

A much-improved school entrance area provides a covered digital information shelter for parents with a secure bike park for pupils.

Also the refurbishment of a former classroom has created a welcoming shared space for parents and newcomer families to learn new skills and build relationships.

*Delivery Partner: Education Authority*

*Status: Complete*



## New Gate Arts & Cultural Centre

*Community Partner: NW Cultural Partnership*

A new Arts & Culture Centre will provide a large multi-use space for cultural and arts activities in the Fountain area.

The centre will be sited on a vacant site, improving the physical environment for locals and visitors.

*Delivery Partner: Derry City & Strabane District Council*

*Status: Development Stage*



## ProKick Community Gym

*Community Partner:*  
*Pro Kick Community Gym*

Coming soon, a new fit for purpose kickboxing facility that will continue to make a positive impact on the physical and mental well-being of people of all ages in East Belfast. This gym will deliver a range of activities for all users regardless of financial situation, age, background or culture.

*Delivery Partner:*  
*Belfast City Council*

*Status: Design Stage*



## Ballymacarrett Walkway

*Community Partner:*  
*EastSide Partnership*

This physical and environmental improvements project links from the Comber Greenway via C.S. Lewis Square to Titanic Halt including Island Street. This project will improve and promote connectivity across the area for locals and visitors.

*Delivery Partner:*  
*Belfast City Council and Department for Infrastructure*

*Status: On-site*



## Reverend Robert Bradford Play Park

*Community Partner: Multiple Local Community Organisations*

*Project Partner: Department for Communities*

An extensive refurbishment of the existing community park is almost complete. It is designed to be a safe, welcoming and inclusive play park for people from different cultures and backgrounds across and within the local community.

*Delivery Partner:*  
*Belfast City Council*

*Status: Final Section to Complete*



## Arellian Nursery School

*Community Partner:*  
*Arellian Nursery School*

A new all-weather outdoor classroom provides a bright, welcoming space that can also be used for cross cultural events. A place where people can feel safe and connected, regardless of their religious or ethnic background.

*Delivery Partner:*  
*Education Authority*

*Status: Complete*



## Glenbryn Play Park

*Community Partner: Multiple Local Community Organisations*

*Project Partner: Department for Communities*

This new play park delivered on derelict waste ground in the Glenbryn neighbourhood has been a great success. The facility provides safe play area for toddlers and accessible community space for young people.

*Delivery Partner:*  
*Belfast City Council*

*Status: Complete*



## Titanic Halt

*Community Partner:*  
*Ballymac Friendship Centre*

This project will create a safe and welcoming gateway to EastSide for visitors arriving via train at Titanic Station. On completion it will improve connectivity between communities in the EastSide Urban Village area and Titanic Quarter.

*Delivery Partner:*  
*Department for Communities*

*Status: On-site*



# What's On

## - a different approach

Not our usual packed schedule of events for this issue. Here are just a few examples of the great community responses to the current crisis.



**Ballymac Friendship Centre** preparing meals for vulnerable people living in the EastSide Urban Village area.



### Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

We are in unprecedented times with the threat of COVID-19 bringing normal life and activity, especially groups and gatherings, to a halt.

**North Belfast** - a large number of Urban Villages supported groups have come together to form the Crisis Intervention Team initiative delivering food parcels, meals, medication and prescriptions to the isolated, sick and vulnerable.



**Footprints Women's Centre** have extended the social supermarket's opening hours and distribute free food parcels to those most in need.

We, like you, are sticking to the guidance and we are practicing social distancing. We will not be meeting together in groups, large or small, until such time as guidelines are relaxed.

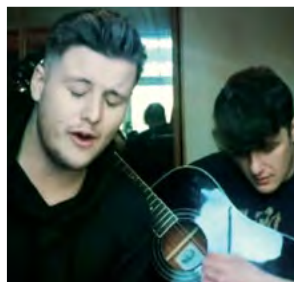


**New Gate Arts** provide online bagpipe and highland dance lessons and delivering food supplies to people feeling isolated.



In the meantime, groups and organisations have mobilised and adapted with energy and speed to respond to these new circumstances; to reach out to help and protect the most vulnerable in communities.

**Belfast South Community Resources** now have a database of over 65s locally so that they can deliver food parcels to vulnerable people.



**Feilé Derry - The Streets Alive team** have been keeping people entertained online through a variety of live performances and creative lessons.

The community groups that would usually be delivering a wide range of activities including family events, sport, workshops, drama, youth projects, music festivals and much more; are now using all their creative energy to support people that are struggling most, providing a crucial lifeline.

### The new Community led call for projects

It is a time of transition; we are at the end of the first three years of the Urban Villages Initiative programme, and most projects are at the end of a funding cycle. Recently an open call for funding was completed.

Groups and organisations have applied for support to continue to engage with local people,

while promoting good relations at the heart of the Urban Villages areas.

This exciting new and extended programme of events and activities will be rolling out this year.

There will be necessary adaptations of programmes to take us through this time of crisis, but we know that the community groups and organisations we support will approach these challenges with the energy and

commitment that has been shown throughout the life of the Urban Villages Initiative programme.

If you would like to be added to be our database, email [info@urbanvillagesni.org](mailto:info@urbanvillagesni.org)

We will keep you updated with What's on in your area using Twitter ([@UrbanVillagesNI](https://twitter.com/UrbanVillagesNI)) and through regular e-zines. [#BetterTogetherApart](https://twitter.com/BetterTogetherApart) [#ThrivingPlaces](https://twitter.com/ThrivingPlaces)

# News

## Making a Difference Together

**The Urban Villages Initiative has developed Area Based Plans for each of the five Urban Village areas across Belfast and Derry-Londonderry.**

These plans tell you about the programme and provide a current update on the 'state of play', in terms of investment in people and places.

The five individual plans that were launched at events in Belfast and Derry-Londonderry have easily understood illustrated maps and summaries of projects and programmes as well as data, recording the programme impact on people and places.

The plans reflect how public sector and community are working better together to support, connect and animate the Urban Village areas and developing thriving places.

Speaking at the launch in Belfast, Mark Browne, Director of Strategic Policy, Equality & Good Relations at the Executive Office said; ***"The Urban Villages Initiative Area Based Plans capture the Executive Office's investment in people and places where community organisations and individuals are really making a***



***difference to the lives of local people and working towards a more connected and thriving community."***

### What are the Area Based Plans for?

- Visual, easily understood information and a concise record of the Urban Villages Initiative investment to date - to be shared across all stakeholders.
- A useful tool to engage others with an interest in supporting and growing projects - or to consider wider investment in the Urban Village areas.




If you would like to receive hard copies of the plans by post - email us with your address details and what Urban Village area/s you would like to see at [info@urbanvillagesni.org](mailto:info@urbanvillagesni.org)

Alternatively, the five Areas Based Plans are available to view on The Executive Office website:

### Urban Villages Initiative - Area Based Plans

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/urban-villages-initiative-area-based-plans>

 Launch of the Area Based Plans in Belfast  
<https://youtu.be/50ctNaUUDmE>

 Launch of the Area Based Plans in Derry-Londonderry  
<https://youtu.be/RsMFdOYnetY>

# News



## Buddy Benches in Schools Combat Loneliness

**The Colin Men's Shed have designed and made Buddy Benches for local primary schools in the Colin Urban Village area.**

The multi-coloured benches were hand built and installed to help schoolchildren avoid loneliness and bullying.

Any child feeling vulnerable simply sits on the bench, and other children know to engage and befriend them. This not only helps the vulnerable child, but also teaches the other pupils social responsibility.

Local primary schools, Ionad Na Fuisioige, Holy Evangelist, Good Shepherd, St. Kieran's and Christ the Redeemer received the buddy benches.

Umberto (Scap) Scappaticci, who manages the Men's Shed at Colin Neighbourhood Partnership (CNP) commented *"We were delighted to build these benches for the local schools. It gives us great pleasure knowing they will be helping children to help each other in such a positive way and also ties in with CNP's strategy for Mental Health."*



## Belfast Community Oscars - Aisling Awards

The Aisling Awards are the community Oscars of Belfast and have celebrated the bridge-builders and grassroots community champions transforming the city of Belfast.

The Urban Villages Initiative got behind the Awards this year by supporting an award that would shine the spotlight on projects from Urban Village areas across Belfast.

**The Urban Village Ambassadors Award had four excellent projects shortlisted, as finalists including:**

- Colin Neighbourhood Partnership (CNP): Colin Events Programme
- YEHA & StreetBeat: Carezone in Schools, North Belfast
- East Belfast Mission: Turas
- South Belfast Alternatives: South Belfast Youth Action Partnership (YAP)

**The Urban Village Ambassadors Award was won by South Belfast Youth Action Partnership (YAP).**

ABOUT YAP - a positive youth programme - collaborating across Donegall Pass, the Markets, and Sandy Row in the South Belfast Urban Village area; increasing contact between young people and forming bonds that have successfully mitigated against tensions in the area.

## Keep in touch

Stay updated with what's happening in your Urban Village area. To join our mailing list send your contact details to [info@urbanvillagesni.org](mailto:info@urbanvillagesni.org)

**Focus Magazine** - Next issue - March 2020. If you have any local community stories or events that you would like included, just let us know.

**Ezines** - Ezines will keep you updated throughout the year on what's happening in your Urban Village area and beyond.

**Twitter** - Keep the conversation going @urbanvillagesni

**Youtube Channel** - View videos of the great community projects we support



# News Highlights



## Catriona Walsh

In addition to success at the Urban Villages supported Talk Like TED youth programme and TEDx Women event,

Catriona from Derry-Londonderry travelled to London to interview Hollywood stars Emilia Clark and Henry Golding who were promoting their latest film, Last Christmas.



Watch her interview here::

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNdjINbiD5E&feature=youtu.be>



## Jamie-Lee O'Donnell seen here with Mary Molloy, Comms and Events Officer and Paddy Danagher, Streets Alive coordinator

Jamie-Lee O'Donnell, best known as Michelle from Derry Girls has joined the team at Gasyard Wall Féile, as a patron.

Jamie-Lee will offer her insight into growing up in Derry and her journey into acting to participants on training programmes, and at Féile events throughout the year.

## Hon Howard Quayle visits quality regeneration project in the Colin Urban Village area

Before meeting the First and deputy First Minister, the Chief Minister of the Isle of Man, Hon Howard Quayle got to see first-hand how the Urban Villages Initiative is making a difference in local communities. On his visit to Colin he saw how projects that were improving the physical environment were also playing an important role in improving good relations in the area.



## EastSide Awards

The Urban Villages Initiative sponsored the Best Community Project award at the 2020 Eastside Awards. The award was won by Dementia Friendly East Belfast

and was presented by Junior Minister Declan Kearney and Minister Diane Dodds. Three other Urban Villages supported projects were recognised; Hosford Health & Wellbeing Hub, EastSide Tourism and Linda Ervine, Turas.



WE WANT  
TO HEAR  
FROM  
YOU...

URBAN VILLAGES FOCUS MAGAZINE will tell you what's happening and what the Executive is supporting across the Urban Village Areas in Belfast and Derry~Londonderry.

The local stories you have read have come from community groups and individuals in Urban Village areas. We want this magazine to reflect the great things that are happening where you live and welcome your comments and ideas!

If you would like to receive future editions of FOCUS Magazine, sign up at [info@urbanvillagesni.org](mailto:info@urbanvillagesni.org) or contact us at The Urban Villages Initiative, Knockview Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SJ



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