

Community Grant Funding

March
2022

*Promoting
involvement
across all our
communities*



**Housing
Executive**

Contents

“ Making a difference
through fairness,
passion and expertise.”



South West Area
Cultural day
P4



North Belfast
Community Shed
P5



South & East Belfast
Community Pantomime
P6



West Belfast & Shankill
Community Farm
P7



Lisburn & Castlereagh
Community Garden
P8



Ards & North Down
Getting Connected
P9



South Area
Wellness Centre
P10



South Down
Good Morning Down
P11



Mid Ulster
Fivemiletown Together
P12



South Antrim
Crafty Crafter
P13



Mid & East Antrim
Portglenone Paddlers
P14



Causeway
Women in Gardening
P15



West Area
Stay and play
P16

The Housing Executive is very fortunate to work with many amazing community groups and volunteers. They are the backbone of our communities. All through the year groups provide support, compassion and dedication. Moreover, community groups meticulously plan projects which help make a real difference to so many lives and we would like all groups to know how much we appreciate what you do.

To access more information, please use the QR or visit.

nihe.gov.uk/Community/Community-Involvement/Community-Involvement-Grants-Application



Promoting community involvement across all our communities

Our Community Involvement Strategy 2018-2023 focuses on the Housing Executive's continuing commitment to improving and encouraging effective community engagement through our community involvement framework.

Tenant participation and community involvement is embedded into the way the Housing Executive delivers services and we are committed to ensuring that we engage with our customers in a way that suits them.

“*To work in partnership, ensuring everyone has access to a good affordable home, in a safe and healthy community.*”

What do we mean by community involvement?

Community involvement is how we enable, engage and empower our communities to influence, challenge and lobby to help improve our services.

By engaging directly with us in a way that suits communities we have the chance to really improve what we do and how we do it. Using methods appropriate to the needs of our customer is integral to continually improving our services.

How do we invest in community involvement?

The Housing Executive has invested in our communities through various funding streams including our revenue and capital works programmes, our community cohesion and community safety initiatives and most recently the investment we have made in our social enterprise programmes.

We invest approximately £2.5m each year in community involvement activities ranging from the provision of direct support to community groups through our service level agreement with Supporting Communities, the provision of community lettings, our community grants programme, the sponsoring of our annual community conference and supporting the various tiers of our Housing Community Network.

The Community Grant Scheme is open to all constituted community groups that participate in or are part of our Housing Community Network. Community grants projects can focus on any of the four themes:

- Health & wellbeing
- Environmental improvements
- Intergenerational initiatives
- Digital inclusion



Cultural Hillsborough

The Campsie over 50's Retirement Club took their members for a cultural learning experience to Hillsborough

THE PROJECT

The members learnt about the historical importance of Hillsborough Castle, which has been used for many important conferences.

In 2010, talks took place between British Prime Minister- Gordon Brown, Irish Taoiseach- Brian Cowen and representatives of the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin on the crisis over Northern Irish policing, which threatened to derail power-sharing.

In recent history, Hillsborough Castle has been visited by presidents and royalty but has also been an important site in terms of reconciliation.

The cultural day brought the group members closer together as they have developed friendships and a support network for life.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Many of the group commented the highlight of the project was learning about the history of the Hillsborough Castle.

Mo Mowlam opened the site to the public in 1999, giving ordinary people the opportunity to enjoy the extensive grounds of the estate.

Hillsborough Castle has been a grand family home and is now the official home of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and a royal residence. Members of the royal family stay at Hillsborough when visiting Northern Ireland. Since it is viewed by some as a politically neutral venue, Hillsborough has played an important role in the peace process in Northern Ireland since the 1980s.

The group felt the facilities were fantastic and everyone left feeling they had a greater knowledge of the historical importance of the castle.

The trip helped engage with the local community and link in with members of the community who were at risk of isolation.

“ The cultural learning that took place that day has allowed us to grow our group from 54 to 65 members and bonded many members, with some of the new members recommending the group to their friends. ”

Shirley Halkyard, Club Treasurer

“ I didn't even know this group existed until I was up at the Dam one day whilst the group was fishing and I was offered a cup of tea, since then I haven't looked back. I look forward to the group every week with all the craic and banter with all the men. For the last while I was going for a walk a couple of times a day, to kill the boredom but now I can be more proactive. When I am bored I go down and look after plants, help the centre and do anything needed which feels amazing. ”

Jim Bowers,
Ligoniel Men's Group



The Community Shed Project

The Community Shed Project was developed by Ligoniel Improvement Association

THE PROJECT

The shed has become a huge asset to the area, as it has attracted groups from both inside and outside North Belfast to take part in projects.

The group who utilised it the most is the 'Men's Wellbeing Group.'

The group began as a number of socially isolated retired or unemployed men who wanted to do something to keep them occupied, but it has become so much more than this.

The men now use the shed for tea/coffee, workshops, shelter and a chat, whilst using the polytunnels to learn new skills and grow fruit and vegetables.

The group use the shed everyday with at least one member coming in and doing something proactive even when the group is not scheduled to meet.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

There were many highlights of this programme especially the physical, mental and social benefits of getting out of the house and doing something with people who have similar interests.

But the main highlight was the amount of amazing volunteer work these men have done to maintain the polytunnels and shed site on the run up to Christmas.

They have massively helped local people in the area by packing food parcels, making a new disability ramp and widening the shed door for larger wheelchairs, delivering food hampers and making Christmas logs for local families.

Lagan Village Community Pantomime

Lagan Village Youth & Community Group were funded to hold a Christmas Panto with a group of children which included young people with additional needs from the Lagan Village area



THE PROJECT

Throughout the course of 10 workshops, the young people were able to learn their parts for the pantomime.

These meetings gave the participants plenty of opportunity to build friendships and learn about one another.

In order for the group to gain confidence in performing they were guided through the workshops with experienced performers and they learnt the music, dances and words for the show in just 10 weeks.

At the end of the workshops the groups were more than ready to perform in front of an audience.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Without this funding, the young people would not have had the opportunity to learn from each other.

Every single person who took part had something unique to contribute to the workshops and the all of the young people were able to perform, regardless of their abilities.

Throughout this project the young people built confidence in themselves, learnt new skills and were able to feel a connection with their community.

Hopefully, these young people will continue to engage with the extremely worthwhile programmes at Lagan Village Youth and Community Group and become community champions.

“ The impact of the performance was that it had a massive impact on developing and building better cohesion for all in the community. The project brought together a range of diverse people from the community who acted as one to bring together a Christmas show that all in the community contributed to and a lot more enjoyed. ”

*George Newell, CDO,
Lagan Village Youth Centre*

St James Community Farm

**As part of their activities,
St James Community Forum
manage a community farm
within the Falls Road area of
Belfast**

THE PROJECT

The farm provides an opportunity for residents and visitors to interact with nature and animals in an urban environment. This farm contributes to the environmental development of the area, which also includes Bog Meadows.

Community grant funding from the Housing Executive enabled the group to secure additional land, which had been gifted by the Ulster Wildlife Trust to extend the farm.

St James Community Farm held a Christmas event to welcome new and previous visitors to the site and of course the animals were a particularly big hit with children and families.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The financial support for the project has allowed the community group to create a safe enclosure for the animals. They have expanded and increased the potential of the space so that it can be enjoyed by many more people.

There is nothing like this project in the area or indeed in any inner city areas across the city and that is why it is so unique.

It has created a very special opportunity for young people and their families to have daily experiences with animals and nature in an urban setting.

For young people this connection with nature is invaluable and given its easy access to surrounding communities, so many families will benefit.

“The grant from the Housing Executive allowed us to expand the farm by erecting fencing and securing a grazing area at the bog meadows. The animals are now in a safe environment and passers-by and local residents feed and pet the animals every day. This has had a real positive impact on our farm and the St James area especially now that our development work has started and this is the only area of the farm now in use.”

Damien Lindsay, St James Community Forum

Deriagh Community Garden

Grant funding has helped the community garden 'grow' and it now has six allotments



THE PROJECT

Derriagh Village Community Association worked tirelessly supporting the most elderly and vulnerable Housing Executive tenants throughout the pandemic.

Jim McLaughlin (Community Representative) stayed in touch regularly to meet requests for additional food parcels in the area and checking in on tenants to ensure they remained connected.

The project was hugely significant during a lockdown as it encouraged individuals to come forward and make a difference in their community.

The volunteers who work on the community garden are from catholic and protestant backgrounds.

This shared space has provided the opportunity for an ex-service man and an ex-prisoner to find common ground as the community garden was the catalyst to help them build a relationship with one another.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Milltown/Derriagh was once a community that was majority Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist.

Over the years it has become an area that has integrated more religions and ethnic groups into the area.

Through development projects like the community garden, the perception of the Milltown/Derriagh is improving as it is becoming more inclusive and there is growing demand for Housing Executive tenure in the area.

The intention for this garden was to grow vegetables to give to the local older residents and families who needed support.

In the future, it is planned the space will be used to carry out events such as Christmas celebrations, annual fun days and other events that previously there was no suitable location.

Vegetables are currently growing and when ready, these will be given to the Housing Executive tenants and others throughout the neighbourhood. An allotment has also been set aside for the local Mums and Tots group.

“ A more cohesive and safe environment has been created. It is now a welcoming space with colourful flowers and summer benches. In a time where everything is changeable on a daily basis and how we socialise is restricted, this project has been the foundation to support mental health and well-being in the area. ”
Jim McLaughlin, Derriagh Community Association



Getting Connected

This project was developed as part of the need for digital support in the community by the Portaferry Community Collective

This is a fantastic example of a local community using our funding to help connect residents online and allow them to get in touch with a number of services that are available to them.
Owen Brady, Ards & North Down Area Manager

THE PROJECT

On the behalf of the group, St Mary's Primary School surveyed families in June 2020 and discovered that only 56% had access to PC/laptop/tablet. The group believed this percentage of people in Portaferry without access to IT equipment or the internet was worrying.

Portaferry Community Collective decided to work closely with partner groups in the village to identify those in need, so they could provide laptops and tablets. As well as this the group purchased sim cards with pre-load data to enable engagement from people who were the most isolated and needed to access support, advice and engage in online activities. Throughout the programme there was a particular emphasis on the older population, school children and their families.

There was support available to help keep members of the community who suffer from rural poverty and social isolation connected, thereby helping to try to reduce poor educational attainment, social isolation and mental health problems. Many families would have struggled without the project and it was especially important in the times of home schooling during the pandemic.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The data sims enabled children to view school work at home, connect remotely with the school to enhance their learning outcomes and support continued educational development.

In addition to this, Portaferry groups were able to do more online workshops, activities and hold more meetings to increase connections with the rural residents. All of this helped the volunteers and their members to connect at a time when it was very easy to feel alone and isolated.

Portaferry Community Collective Ltd will be looking at developing their projects further to benefit more individuals. Community grant funding has provided resources and equipment that ensured that anyone interested, will be able to participate in any future activities.

Portadown Wellness Centre

Portadown Wellness Centre was able to implement a wood carving suite using the funding from the Community Grant stream

“The Housing Executive was one of our first funders and we would never have been able to establish the services we now offer (including the woodcarving suite) without their support. Portadown Wellness Centre exists to help people recover from mental illness, regain their confidence and self-worth and become happier more fulfilled individuals. Mental illness can affect anybody regardless of religion, financial status or sexuality and can be a distressing and frightening experience. Our objective is to provide support and empowerment for those experiencing mental ill health, addiction, loneliness, isolation or physical illness. Our model of combining emotional support with practical activities is proving very successful and effective.”

Alan McDowell, Founder

THE PROJECT

The wood carving suite runs weekly and they are very fortunate to have two incredibly talented wood carvers as tutors, Derek Black and Alan Anderson.

£3,000 of Community Grant funding allowed the group to purchase the equipment and tools to set up the suite.

The benefit of this facility is phenomenal, it has been utilised by the members of the community who require rehabilitation and those suffering from mental illness.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

A number of Occupational Therapists in the Portadown Wellness Centre recommended wood carving to some of their patients to assist in their rehabilitation.

Wood carving helps with emotional integration and is an artistic activity which is inherently therapeutic. Therapists believe that wood carving provides social engagement and cultural meaning which will improve mindfulness.

Some of the results of carving have been that patients are less stressed, more positive and emotionally stable.

Learning to wood carve is ultra-relaxing but it also promotes self-confidence and self-esteem. People who carve as a hobby feel calm and relaxed while carving. Some even carve without any target, just for that relaxing feeling.

Another benefit of this project is that anyone can learn the skills and there are no deadlines.



Good Morning Down

On 27 November 2019, Good Morning Down hosted an intergenerational Christmas event in Downpatrick Cricket Club



THE PROJECT

Good Morning Down is a befriending service and community safety group, which engages with up to 170 older and vulnerable residents across the Down area on a regular and ongoing basis.

The Christmas event was a greatly anticipated occasion, providing an opportunity for 120 GMD members to meet in person, socialise and celebrate the spirit of the festive season with a Christmas dinner together.

The day was rounded off with a visit from Santa Claus who kindly presented each attendee with their own Christmas gift.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Following the event, GMD asked their members to provide feedback on the intergenerational Christmas festivities.

Almost every respondent described the event as 'very good' or 'excellent' with a majority of respondents also selecting 'very good' or 'excellent' when asked to describe how they enjoyed the intergenerational interaction with the pupils.

This event allowed GMD members to hear presentations and visit information stalls set up by various charity and statutory bodies including the Housing Executive.

Importantly, the event offered an opportunity for members to interact with pupils from the nearby De La Salle School who treated attendees with marvelous renditions of their favourite Christmas carols.

“ *This Christmas event is a fantastic opportunity to bring our members together to join us in some Christmas cheer. There are members who would consider our regular calls a lifeline service and I am delighted that we can host events like these so everyone to get together at this time of year and have a chat face-to-face.* ”
Linda Baker, GMD Coordinator



Fivemiletown Together

The Fivemiletown Estates Group was established in 2002 in order to give local residents a platform from which to raise local issues

THE PROJECT

In 2019, Fivemiletown received Community Grant funding from Mid Ulster Housing Executive to run a range of classes and events within the local community.

The events addressed health and wellbeing while bringing local residents of all ages together.

At the health awareness session, local pharmacists attended and gave a talk that covered many issues including wellbeing, diet, and the use of prescription medicine.

This was followed by afternoon tea provided by a local shop and during the tea and chat the pharmacists carried out health checks with local residents.

The group also received funding to run a series of Christmas craft classes which were very popular and funding also provided Christmas dinner for residents living in local fold accommodation

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

This project helped to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents and increased their understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and exercise.

The programme of events brought people together in a social environment and helped to reduce the sense of isolation which is often felt among older people.

The group's use of the Community Funding within the local community helped to promote the groups work, the projects they offer and has raised greater awareness, which will help increase membership and engagement in future worthwhile projects.

“ The events we ran with support from the Housing Executive Community Fund has helped to bring people from different age groups and ethnic backgrounds and increased sense of community.

Phyllis Clare, Fivemiletown Estates Group ”

Crafty Crafters

Throughout the duration of the project, the Queens Park Women's Group met once a week for two hours over an eight-week period

THE PROJECT

The participants enjoyed a range of crafts activities and were able to get to know other people in their community a little better.

Crafty Crafters first received funding for this project through community grants and the sessions were so successful that they applied for further funding to run extra classes through cohesion funding.

Ongoing projects like these have an immensely positive impact on our communities' health and wellbeing.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

This was a very positive project, which brought the community together from different religions and age groups.

Residents who took part felt that their mental health was better because they were interacting in a relaxed and fun environment.

The participants were proud of the pieces of art they were making and so they felt a sense of achievement.

There was a desire for the project to continue and all of the group agreed it was important to try to look for additional funding.

The group hoped that further classes could be facilitated and they could continue to meet and complete new projects with friends they may not have met without the funding.

“ Taking part each week with the women at the craft classes was brilliant! Not only did we learn something new but we made new and lasting friendships. Painting ceramics with a great group of women really helped with my mental health and gave me a great outlook for the rest of the week. ”
Carolyn Nelson, Queens Park Women's Group



Portglenone Paddlers

Portglenone Paddler Group organised paddling sessions after they had received funding to purchase equipment for a programme called Getting Active on the Bann

“ We are always pleased to fund projects that encourage people to get out of their homes and get active. Good health and wellbeing is very important and projects such as this encourage people to get involved in outdoor activities, make new connections and learn new skills. It is also a great opportunity to further utilise the great facilities at Portglenone Marina. ”
Mairead Myles-Davey,
Mid & East Antrim Area Manager

THE PROJECT

The project was aimed at encouraging people of all ages from the area to take part in this alternative outdoor leisure activity.

Paddle sports have a very positive impact on both mental and physical health.

The engagement with this project was astounding, there were over 200 participants who took part in the weekly sessions on the River Bann and the pool session at Antrim Forum.

Throughout the course of the programme, the group also taught participants about the environment and protection of the waterways.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Portglenone Paddlers became aware of the demand for such programmes after recent paddling sessions became greatly oversubscribed.

With the funding from the Housing Executive, they were able to buy additional equipment and provide more sessions to encourage more of our residents to come along and try a new activity.

The group were delighted to see residents of all ages making new social connections and increasing their wellbeing through this newly accessible water based physical activity.

Throughout the sessions, the club gained new volunteers who will help grow the group and the popularity of the sport. Two new volunteers were able to achieve their Paddle Sport Instructor Awards.

There was also a 15% increase in participants and this is all thanks to the Community Grant funding.

Women in Gardening

Cloughmills Community Action Team (CCAT) received funding for an exciting programme called Women in Gardening



THE PROJECT

The group initially set up a community garden on land behind a local pub, but now operates from a former mill site of some 4.5 acres in the middle of the village.

The site is open for community access all the time and is managed cooperatively by a group of volunteers.

CCAT manage a significant food growing project and associated skills training programme including gardening courses and cooking activities for people of all ages.

They use permaculture principles on site and maximise the biodiversity potential by not using any chemicals.

The objective of this project was to build skills in gardening and food production, having a beneficial impact for health and wellbeing.

There was a great uptake of local women to the programme as it was a new and exciting opportunity for them to cultivate a space in their community and meet other like-minded women.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Many of the women who took part may never have met one another and they may have never had the opportunity to do gardening in the past.

The programme has developed lasting relationships between the participants and the work of CCAT in the community garden.

Those who took part loved the satisfaction of seeing the small seeds growing into something they could eat. Some of the group were so taken by their new gardening skills that they became regular volunteers and now help maintain the space as a community resource.

CCAT organise regular social and therapeutic horticultural programmes and host placements for people from all backgrounds. Their success is due to the fact the project is very much driven and 'owned' by the community and volunteers.

The Covid 19 crisis has encouraged the group to look beyond the site and bring our core principles into people's homes. This included the distribution of meals, food and wildflower growing packs, craft packs, herbal tea planters and the latest venture which will see the group providing equipment, hens and support to 6 households enabling them to look after 3 hens in their back gardens/yards.

“ Delighted to see the Cloughmills community group continue to deliver innovated projects that are meaningful and is beneficial to its members. ”
Peter Mullan, Patch Manager, Housing Executive

Stay and Play

Lisnafin/Ardnalee Trust Community Association applied for Community Grant funding in 2020



“ These new activity tables will allow the children to engage in a variety of fun and educational activities with help of their carers, making our Stay & Play more fun and enjoyable. A big thank you to Eddie Breslin for his assistance and to the Housing Executive for providing the funding. ”

*Damien Gavigan,
Project Co-ordinator*

THE PROJECT

Before the group received funding from the Housing Executive's Community Grant Fund, the facilities were unacceptable and unfit for their members.

Participants had to use baby changing mats on the floor in the ladies or disabled toilets, which were cramped and unsanitary.

The carers attending the free 'Stay & Play' sessions, especially older grandparents found it difficult to kneel down on the floor to change the babies and toddlers.

This funding enabled the Lisnafin Community Centre to purchase activity tables and a nappy changing station. The new baby changing unit made it easier for these older carers. It reduced the risk of injury and the facilities are now also more hygienic, as the unit can be cleaned easily after use.

Lisnafin/ Ardnalee Trust Community Association also applied for funding for a bouncy castle, which will increase engagement with the families in the community through special events and fun days.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The funding obtained has improved the Stay and Play service for the 0-4 year olds and their families.

Parents and grandparents no longer need to change their children on the floor of the community centre. They now can have privacy and a safe place to provide essential care for their young children.

The activity tables in the centre were in disrepair and this limited the activities that could be carried out with the community.

Thanks to the funding, the group have a new bouncy castle and better equipment they can run activities all year round.

Grandparents are more comfortable to attend the Stay to Play session, this is something that the group felt very strong about as many parents these days rely on help from their parents.

The centre is now a lot better equipped and is accessible to many more people in the community.