

Belfast PEACEPLUS 1.1 Local Community Action Plan

Stage 1 Engagement Report

January 2023



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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

PEACEPLUS 2021-2027

PEACEPLUS is a new European Union funding programme designed to support peace and prosperity across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, building upon the work of the previous PEACE and INTERREG Programmes. In July 2022, the European Commission formally adopted the €1.14 billion investment Programme in the social, economic, and environmental development of Northern Ireland and the border counties. The finalisation and ratification of the arrangements between the United Kingdom and the European Commission, is anticipated in early 2023, when the Programme will be officially launched, and funding calls opened.

The Programme comprises six themes as outlined in Figure 1 below. These encompass 22 investment areas all of which is managed by the Special European Programmes Body (SEUPB).

Figure 1: PEACEPLUS Programme Themes



The overall objective of the PEACEPLUS Programme will be to build Peace and Prosperity and ensure that this Programme will leave a lasting and tangible legacy across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. The Programme's strategy is to continue to take the opportunities and address the needs arising from the peace process in order to boost economic growth and stimulate social and economic regeneration and secondly, to promote social inclusion, particularly for those at the margins of economic and social life. The Programme will help to address many long-standing social and economic challenges which have, and continue to impact on communities, particularly those in rural border areas, as well as ongoing challenges that exist in urban settings.

One of these investment areas is Theme 1.1 Co-designed Local Community Peace Action Plans. €110M has been allocated to this investment area across the 17 local authorities. Belfast City Council area has been provisionally awarded €17,437,277 which equates to £15,162,850 (based on a €1:£1.15 rate). This figure includes all staff, admin, and management costs, the figures allocated to each theme will be agreed in Stage 2. the peace Action Plan will enable diverse partnerships to establish priority actions for their local areas and collectively address these in a manner which will make a significant and lasting contribution to peace and reconciliation. The plans will be centred around three core themes:

The proposed plans will span the range of activities such as youth development programmes; health and wellbeing initiatives; community regeneration projects; redevelopment and reimagining of

existing community facilities for shared usage; initiatives to build positive relations; social innovation; social enterprise and education and skills development programmes; all designed to address issues of racism and sectarianism, increase social inclusion and promote civil leadership.

- 1) Local community regeneration and transformation.
- 2) Thriving and peaceful communities; and
- 3) Building respect for all cultural identities.

An indicative participant target for Belfast City Council of 17,437 people engaged in PEACEPLUS activity has been outlined by the SEUPB.

In anticipation of the opening of the Programme, the Special European Programmes Body (SEUPB) has encouraged all 17 local authorities to commence the co-design process of their action plans. The action plan will enable and empower local community partnerships to self-determine and deliver priority projects on a cross community basis, which will result in improved, shared, and inclusive local services, facilities and spaces and make a significant and lasting contribution to peace and reconciliation.

PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan Stage 1 Engagement

Governance

It is a requirement from SEUPB that a PEACEPLUS local authority partnership oversee the co-design and implementation of a process in their local authority area which will be used to inform the development and delivery of an overarching PEACE Action Plan ensuring alignment with the local Community Plan for the area.

In March 2022, SEUPB agreed that the existing Shared City Partnership¹ could continue to act as the local PEACEPLUS Partnership for Belfast. The reason for this is that the Shared City Partnership met the requirements of SEUPB in terms of a model of partnership working, comprising of representatives from Elected Members across the City, statutory agencies and social and community partners. It is also a formal working group which makes recommendations to the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

In total, the Shared City Partnership has met nine times to support the co-design process and to engage in discussions around the action plan development process ensuring that the voices of local communities lie at the heart of the new Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan.

Co-design Framework

Following appointment of the Shared City Partnership as the oversight body to develop a plan, the following framework for the co-design process, as prescribed by the SEUPB, was agreed with the Shared City Partnership. It was agreed that the development of the plan would consist of three stages

- Stage 1 – Understanding and identifying the key issues across the city through local consultation and stakeholder engagement
- Stage 2 – Prioritisation of Belfast PEACEPLUS programme under the three themes of Measure 1.1

¹ See Annex 1 for Shared City Partnership members.

- Stage 3 – Development and submission of Action Plan

Stage 1 - Methodology

The partnership agreed the Stage 1 engagement process would comprise of online and public meetings as follows

- Area based and citywide meetings across the four main parts of the city.
- Section 75 and PEACEPLUS Target Group workshops.
- One to one meeting with key stakeholders where appropriate; and
- An e-survey

Once the co-design framework was agreed by the Shared City Partnership and as part of the co-design process, a series of initial Stage 1 public meetings took place across the city at the end of June 22. The purpose of these sessions was to advise residents, community partners and wider stakeholders of the opportunities for Belfast under PEACEPLUS 1.1 Local Community Action Plan and to advise that further engagement would take place in the coming months. A total of five sessions were facilitated as part of this pre-engagement with a total of **63** in attendance.

To begin the more formal process of Stage 1 of developing a PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan, a pre-engagement event took place on 27th September 2022 in City Hall. This event was held to kick start the formal engagement process and help local community leaders mobilise their communities to engage in the wider engagement process. The event was attended by **72** stakeholders from across the city.

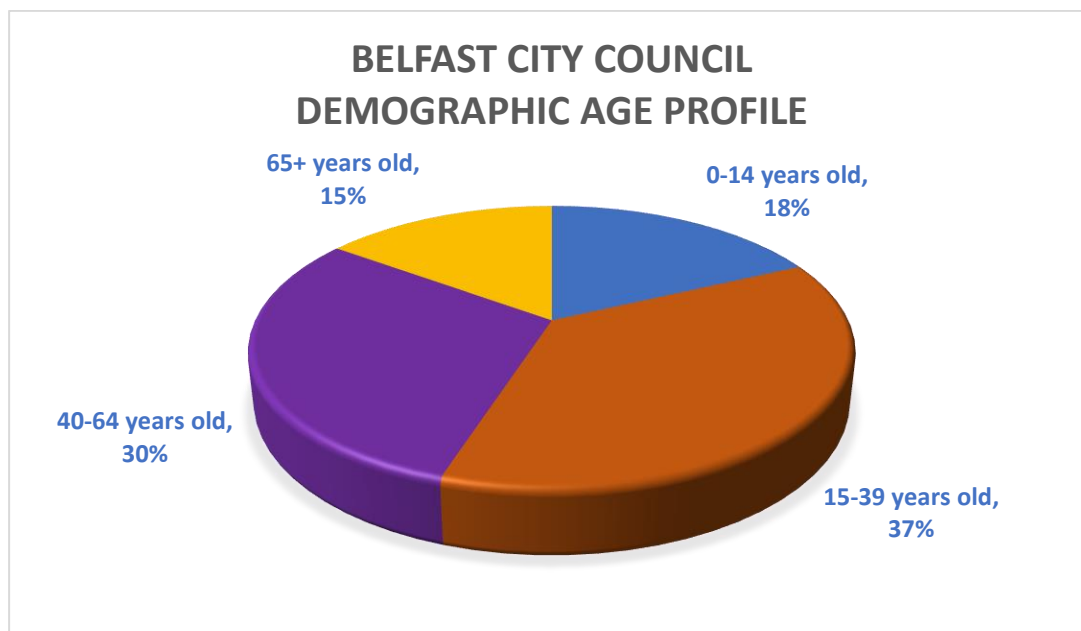
Over the period October to December an **additional 23 area based and section 75/thematic workshops** were held across the city with a total of **246** attending. A number of additional smaller, 1:1 and targeted meetings were facilitated by Council officers and consultants throughout the process to complement the workshops (area specific and thematic) and all engagement will be further built upon as part of stage 2 of the Action Planning process. The workshop format and details of all of the Stage 1 engagement is detailed in Appendix 1

An e-survey was also agreed by the Shared City Partnership and circulated widely by Council across existing networks. In total, **169** people completed the e-survey (see Appendix 2 for summary of survey findings).

SECTION 2: PROFILE OF BELFAST

Demographics

The Census of 2021 for Belfast shows a population of 345,418, which represents an increase of 3.5% since the 2011 Census. **Belfast has a growing population and a relatively young population with approximately one-fifth under the age of 15.** The age profile for the City is outlined below

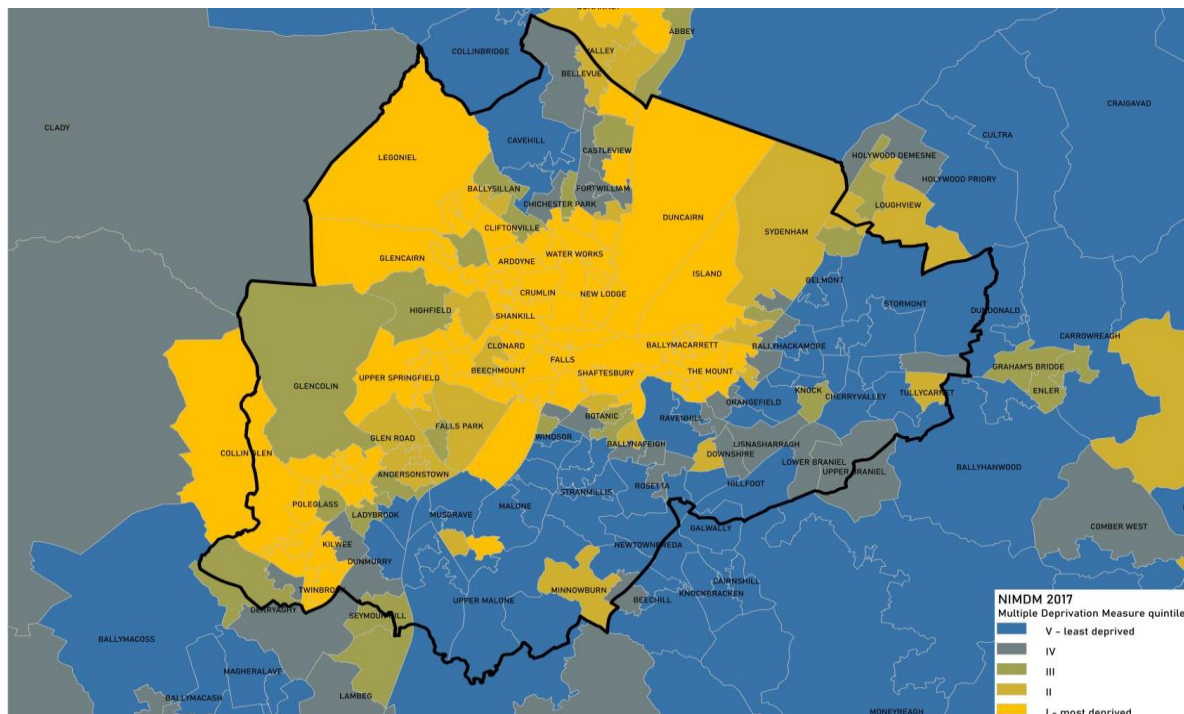


In relation to national identity, it appears there is an increase in those identifying as Irish, Northern Irish identity, and other nationals 34% identify as Irish only, 27% as British only, 17% as Northern Irish only and 10% other national identities. The largest ethnic group in Belfast was identified as White (92.9%). Other identified ethnic groups were: 1.37% - Chinese; 1.29% - Polish*; 1.26% - Indian; 1.2% - Mixed ethnicity; 1.19% -Black African (**People of Polish nationality are counted within the White ethnic group*).

Deprivation

Continuous studies and research highlight that deprivation is distributed unevenly and that West and North Belfast disproportionately have the greatest concentration of the most deprived people. Belfast has 50% of the top 100 most deprived super output areas in Northern Ireland. The greatest levels of deprivation are in Water Works 2, Ardoyne 2, New Lodge 2, Woodvale 1, and Ardoyne 3. In Belfast 27.3% of residents live in the 10% most deprived areas in Northern Ireland.

Figure 2: NI Multiple Deprivation Measure Quintile (least to most deprived) for Belfast (2017)



Community Cohesion

The most recent Belfast Residents' Survey, conducted in 2019 reported that 70% agree that people from different religions and political backgrounds get on well together and a similar proportion (71.4%) agree that people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds get on well together. This is a marked improvement from the 2014 baselines (51.4% and 51.6% respectively). However, these figures continue to mask the architecture of segregation which remains across the city with respect to housing and education. 90% of social housing continues to be segregated, 93% of school education remains segregated. **The desire for change is great, as demonstrated by the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2021 which indicates that 77% of people, if they had a choice, would prefer to live in a mixed-religion neighbourhood.**

Hate Related Crime

PSNI published data highlights the large number of racist incidents in the city, 527 in 2020/21 rising to 545 in 2021/22, homophobic incidents also on the rise from 150 in 2020/21 to 190 in 2021/22 and recorded sectarian incidents remaining the same at 349 incidents in both 2020/21 and 2021/22. **The trend across hate related crime is one of rising numbers, racist incidents are more common in the city than sectarian related incidents which is a worrying figure for a city which seeks to be welcoming and inclusive.**

Security Situation Statistics

	April 2020-March 2021			April 2021-March 2022		
	Belfast	NI	Belfast as % of NI	Belfast	NI	Belfast as % of NI
Deaths	3	3	100%	1	1	100%
Shooting Incidents	17	41	41%	5	20	25%
Bombing Incidents	4	15	27%	2	5	40%
Incendiary Incidents	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
Casualties because of paramilitary style assaults	9	39	23%	9	33	27%
Casualties as a result of paramilitary style shootings	9	18	50%	2	12	17%
Firearms found	5	17	29%	13	45	29%
Rounds of ammunition found	175	2,049	9%	231	1,877	12%
Explosives found (kg)	0.52	2.88	18%	0	0.48	0%
Persons arrested under section 41 of the Terrorism Act	29	105	28%	28	115	24%
Persons arrested under section 41 of the Terrorism Act and subsequently charged	4	20	20%	6	17	35%

Security related incidents, although small in comparison to the years of community conflict, remind us that armed gangs remain a feature of life in the city, particularly concentrated in areas of the city which are the most severely deprived.

The threat posed by paramilitarism remains and was highlighted in the 5th report of the Independent Reporting Commission ² released in December 2022 which states:

'We acknowledge that paramilitarism is not on the same scale as it was during the Troubles/conflict, and it is also the case there are many areas of Northern Ireland today where paramilitaries have little or no direct impact on daily life. But that does not hold true for those communities where the paramilitaries remain strong, and this is a continuing worry in 2022. Paramilitary Groups remain embedded in these communities and are part of the fabric of daily life there.'

Skills and Qualifications

Belfast has a lower qualified resident workforce compared to the Northern Ireland average:

- 36% of people (76,000 people) aged 16-64 are educated to degree level and above – roughly equal to NI average (37%)
- 46% of people (98,000 people) aged 16-64 are educated to below degree level – roughly 3% below NI average (50%)

² <https://www.ircommission.org/sites/irc/files/IRC%20Fifth%20Report%20-%20Web%20Accessible.pdf>

- 18% of people (39,000 people) aged 16-64 have no qualifications - the second highest of any district council and over 4% higher than NI average (14%).³

Economic growth, productivity, social inclusion, and community cohesion are intrinsically linked to education and skills. Increasing skills and qualification levels is therefore beneficial for individuals and Belfast's economy. The areas of greatest deprivation across the city have the lowest percentage of residents with higher qualifications and the greatest number of adults with low or no qualifications. **Skills and qualifications matter to the economic inclusion of Belfast's resident population. The Belfast economy is increasingly skills hungry which further excludes and disadvantages the most deprived areas of the city.**

Health & Wellbeing

In Belfast life expectancy for women is 82.9 years and for men 78.8 years for the 2017 to 2019 period compared to the Northern Ireland average of 82.6 years for women and 78.8 years for men. However, the inequalities gap in life expectancy between the most deprived areas and the city average is 4.0 years for women and 4.7 years for men.

35,458 Belfast-based patients have a diagnosis of depression (i.e., prevalence per 1,000 patients of 81.2), substantially higher than the Northern Ireland prevalence rate of 73.9. 26.1% of Belfast residents show signs of loneliness, notably higher than the Northern Ireland rate of 20.6%. When compared against the most and least deprived areas in Northern Ireland, there is a substantial difference of 14.3 percentage points (i.e., 28.1% and 13.8% respectively).

In 2018, the suicide rate in Belfast was 26.9 per 100,000 persons, notably above the Northern Ireland of 16.3. Rates are higher in men (i.e., 28.0) than women (i.e., 9.5), especially amongst those aged between 25 and 34 years of age. **With respect to health and wellbeing Belfast does not compare favourably against the Northern Ireland average, but of more pressing concern is the considerably higher concentration of health inequality within the most deprived areas of the city (West & North Belfast).**

Current relevant research

Belfast City Council Good Relations Audit

The recent **BCC Good Relations Audit** undertaken between June and December 2022 involving over 250 individuals and organisations highlighted the most pressing good relations issues as **sectarianism and paramilitarism**, while the greatest barriers to better good relations were identified as lack of funding, segregation, racism and leadership. From surveys and workshops, some of the key issues identified included:

- Fewer than 20% of people feel Belfast is a very shared city – most believe it a little shared;

³ Labour Market Partnership Belfast profile, Department for Economy, 2021

- Critical issues are considered to be: **challenging sectarianism and racism, the influence of paramilitarism, hate incidents and crimes**, and involving young people in Good Relations initiatives;
- Ongoing segregation is identified as a critical barrier to being a more shared city;
- 77% of the community respondents say sectarianism is a very significant problem in Belfast – 65% say racism is a very significant problem. 93% of staff say sectarianism is a very significant issue in the city;
- At a local level people say the cost-of-living crisis, housing, the environment and young people are their greatest concerns;
- By and large, **people feel their cultural identity is respected though with some way to go** – 29% say their culture is respected well/very well compared to 19% respected poorly/very poorly, the balance say it is average. **Cultural respect is perceived to be most disrespected amongst people from a Protestant background**

Belfast City Council Research report on ethnic minority and migrant population

A recent **BCC Research report on minority ethnic and migrant population in Belfast**⁴ noted that over the past 20 years, Belfast has experienced an increase in the Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities making Belfast their home. Minority ethnic residents have made significant and lasting contributions to the city. But still, many **face challenges of racism, isolation and poverty**.

These have impacted on how they can participate in political, social, and economic life. Through the research a wide range of challenges were identified for both minority ethnic and migrant individuals in **gaining employment, accessing suitable housing, healthcare, education, leisure, political participation, access to justice, safety, economic inclusion, receiving language support, and cultural integration**. However not all of these issues are shared, and it is necessary to understand how different groups are affected by these, as well as how they are highly successful in other areas.

The Belfast Agenda Refresh

The **Belfast Agenda** was refreshed in 2022 supported by a similar process to PEACEPLUS Stage 1 engagement (workshops, consultations, survey). Some of the emerging relevant good relations and peace building issues from this engagement process are outlined below.

Participants welcomed that the plan did not look at equality as simply relationships between the two traditional religious communities and suggested that it be extended to recognise a wide range of vulnerable people and groups. There should be **greater support for newcomer families, refugees and asylum seekers including additional language support services**. It is important that the city is welcoming (more than words) and **provides spaces for children to play and families to gather**.

Specifically, when participants within the refresh process were asked to consider ‘Good Relations & Shared Future’ **the issue of peace walls across the city was raised**; many thought this sensitive issue was being overlooked or ignored. **Issues with respect to paramilitarism, sectarianism and racism should be explicitly named and challenged**. Consultees also felt there could be **greater focus on**

⁴ Inequalities Experienced by Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Traveller people residing in Belfast – Research Summary Report – 2022

language and culture. Other comments included the conflict isn't over but has been slowly legitimised.

Further points included the **difficulty of engaging young men in area** (male/female difference – females more willing to engage); **what's gone wrong in engaging young Protestant males** – digital divide even in young men (no email addresses). . East Belfast has an historically low take up of Good Relations grants, so communities need support to identify and push through applications.

Local communities need support at a local level **to address negativity towards people's culture and race.** This local dimension is very important, especially as situations can be dynamic. Misconceptions and negativity are best addressed in the local community, e.g., concerns about outsiders taking homes or child places or encouraging integration by offering ways to meet new neighbours. The importance of existing groups and networks to help address misperceptions around migrants and to build and facilitate local conversations to integrate people from different communities is important and should be considered for inclusion in relevant funding programmes..

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan has been informed and will continue to be informed by a wide range of strategic documents, such as those outlined below. Some of these are specific to Belfast while others are regional strategies. The Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan will take these strategies into account and complement these strategies where relevant. There is a huge opportunity to help “join the dots” between these different strategies and as such helping to achieve the vision for PEACEPLUS investment in the city. Alongside these the UN Sustainable Development Goals have also been considered.

Regional Strategies	Local Belfast City Council Strategies
Together Building a United Community (TEO)	The Belfast Agenda
Programme for Government Draft Outcomes Framework (TEO)	BCC Corporate Plan 2020-2024
New Decade, New Approach (TEO)	PEACE IV Action Plan
Racial Equality Strategy (TEO)	Belfast GR Strategy
Draft Refugee Integration Strategy (TEO)	Belfast PCSP Strategy and District PCSP Plans
Emerging Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (TEO)	Belfast Local Development Plan
Children and Young People’s Strategy (DE)	A Bolder Vision for Belfast
Fair Start (DE)	Belfast Resilience Strategy
Draft Victims and Survivors Strategy (TEO)	Belfast’s Culture Statement
Shared Education and Community Respect, Equality & Diversity Strategies (DE)	Draft Belfast Physical Activity & Sports Development Strategy
Active Living – Sport and Physical Activity Strategy (DfC)	Belfast Region City Deal
The Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (TEO)	Belfast Economic Strategy 2022-2030
Disability Strategy (DfC)	Belfast Social Value Procurement Policy
Economic Strategy (DfE)	Belfast Recovery Plan
Emerging Social Inclusion Strategies (DfC)	Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS)
Skills Strategy – 10X (DfE)	
People and Place Strategy (DfC)	
Draft Green Growth Strategy (DAERA)	
UV Area Action Plans (TEO)	
Mental Health Strategy (DoH)	

SECTION 4: WHAT WE WERE TOLD?

Issues and Challenges

The Stage 1 process focused on understanding and identifying the key issues across the city, through local consultation and stakeholder engagement using a range of methods as outlined in Section 1, page 5. While, issues and challenges remain, there is recognition from the majority of those engaged that, following years of conflict, Belfast has made progress towards building a more peaceful and reconciled society.

The resultant issues and challenges emerging from the engagement is summarised below.

Overall KEY Issues Identified

- the negative impact of poverty and deprivation
- **perceived class and cultural differences**
- **disengaged young people**
- **dealing with trauma related issues**
- **mental health and wellbeing**
- the ease of access to and the impact of drugs on local communities
- **impact of racism and increase in racist hate crime**
- criminality and criminal gangs

Respondents recognised that Belfast remains a city with high levels of residential, educational, physical, and social segregation in many areas. Around 85 built interface barriers remain in Belfast with many other invisible barriers dotted across the city. Feedback indicates that project activities that could be considered under the local action plan should be broader than the two main communities.

It is not surprising, that the current social and economic challenges faced by communities was a strong issue emerging from the engagement exercise. The cost-of-living crisis, recovery from the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic, the lack of an active devolved government here including changes within leadership at Westminster, the Northern Ireland protocol and Russia's offensive in Ukraine and the subsequent rise in fuel prices are all putting pressure on the most deprived communities across the city. **For many respondents, immediate survival challenges are more critical at the moment than engaging in cross community work.** Although many noted that poverty is both a product of conflict as well as being a cause, it fuels frustration and hopelessness which can in turn lead to further inter/intra community tensions.

Issues that address inequality and build communities, which are inclusive and fair, should be incorporated within PEACEPLUS. Feedback provided supported the building and supporting collaborative partnerships across the community, voluntary and statutory sectors, and furthermore align them with the objectives of the Belfast Agenda and other strategies.

Some respondents referenced the hold that paramilitaries have on young people and their communities. Others referred to this type of activity as criminality and the damage it can cause to individuals, families and communities if not addressed. Many noted that those most at risk from this type of coercive behaviour are those who are most vulnerable., typically young people.

The needs of young people were a recurring theme throughout Stage 1 engagement. The lack of support for young people to address unemployment and underachievement was highlighted. Educational segregation and a lack of progress towards integration in the school system many believed maintains a segregated society which will continue for future generations. Education should be used as a positive factor ensuring young people thrive, learn, and achieve allowing them to enjoy prosperous and rewarding lives. Respondents discussed a lack of role models and intergenerational issues within families which exacerbates sectarianism, racism, and prejudice.

Respondents noted that there are different perspectives across generations, with can be harder to change while it was also noted that the younger generation are more accepting of others and change. Although, it was also acknowledged that young people can be more vulnerable to the influences and coercive control of in their communities.

Some believe that a **lack of hope and aspiration drives some young people into anti-social behaviour activities**, resulting in labelling many young people unfairly as troublemakers in their communities. Some respondents stated that there appears to be a greater sense of apathy and lack of aspiration and a growing fear of cultural erosion. It was recognised that local media reporting and social media also play a negative role in influencing some people's opinions and views, which can undermine the positive work on the ground by young people. Others however felt the youth support system negatively impacted but rather a flawed youth support system that doesn't enable all young people to thrive.

Many young people feel that political leadership, particularly with the assembly not sitting, is letting them down. Offering **innovative peacebuilding dialogue opportunities through PEACEPLUS**, for a generation driven by tech and instant gratification, many believed **will enhance the confidence and capabilities of the young people**.

Health inequalities was highlighted as a major issue for those living in disadvantaged areas, which often correlates with those communities which have been affected by the conflict.

Feedback shows that some of those engaged such as older people, victims of the troubles, ex-prisoners struggle to engage securely in peace programmes as they are unable to protect their identity, and at times they often struggle to see how it can make a difference to their lives. There is **significant trauma and mental health issues related to these hard-to-reach groups** which they believed needed to be addressed under PEACEPLUS.

It was noted that flags, emblems, murals, and kerb painting demarcate territory within single identity areas across the city, especially in housing estates and along interfaces. The expression and celebration of culture and identity remains intimidating for many visitors and newcomer communities. **Greater dialogue and education are needed, including shared history, anti-sectarianism programmes and heritage engagement programmes.**

Belfast has become an increasingly diverse city in the last 20 years, however, some respondents, including service providers felt that some recent migrants find it more difficult to integrate due to language and other barriers such as childcare, a general lack of awareness of opportunities, discrimination in the labour market, being misunderstood, and as a result many generally keep to themselves. Respondents noted that the children of minority ethnic and migrant communities offer potential engagement opportunities for their parents/carers to be become engaged in the community through the school system and through other community settings.

Likewise, **workplaces were also identified as ideal places to engage with and support minority ethnic and migrant communities** across the city. School Census figures show growth of the resident minority ethnic population, from 1,366 minority ethnic and migrant pupils in 2002, to 17,400 in 2020. Language often tends to be the greatest barrier to engagement, especially for older members of the family. The need for educational awareness of other communities to bridge the lack of understanding of cultures was identified.

Racism remains a challenge across the city, and it was suggested that there remain issues of underreporting of racist incidents. Many noted that **silent issues with regard to racism needs to be addressed** across all walks of life from schools through to communities and workplaces. Issues in regard to discrimination around disability, homophobia, racism, and sectarianism are everyday experiences endured across Belfast by many residents. This includes intimidation in certain areas around social housing.

In several workshops, it was reported that **some communities lack confidence to engage in cross community work**. There are perceptions of differences in investment between communities in different parts of the city, which can generate animosity between communities. Many **noted the importance of single identity work which is required to build capacity** and confidence before engagement with other communities can take place.

When discussing the city centre many believed that there is a **lack of open and welcoming shared youth facilities and green spaces in the city centre** as well as a **lack of facilities for some target groups such as the LGBTQAI+ community or for ethnic minority communities**. Better networks connecting the city centre which are accessible for walking, wheeling, and cycling are needed to reduce physical separation from the outer parts of the city.

The impact of high levels of residential, educational, physical, and social segregation across the city was discussed and the importance of **building trust and actively addressing the legacy of the conflict**. This should remain front and centre of all local co-design actions with a focus on building a shared city that leaves no one behind in the process and which is built on quality and respect.

It is important to caveat that the parameters of PEACEPLUS will not enable all issues reported to be addressed. Specifically:

- Not all issues will be eligible for support under 1.1
- Some issues may be more appropriate for support under other PEACEPLUS Measures and indeed other funding opportunities
- There is a finite budget which will require prioritisation of spend across three thematic areas (Community Regeneration and Transformation up to 40%, Thriving and Peaceful Communities up to 40% and Building Respect for all Cultural Identities minimum 20%)
- There is an indicative target of 17,437 participants engaged in PEACEPLUS activity, which will also necessitate prioritising projects that will meet this, and other selection criteria detailed in the SEUPB call document when it is issued
- Capital projects need to be realistic, sustainable deliverable, Value For Money and aligned to PEACEPLUS objectives.

High-Level GEOGRAPHICAL Based Prioritised Issues and Challenges During Phase 1 Engagement

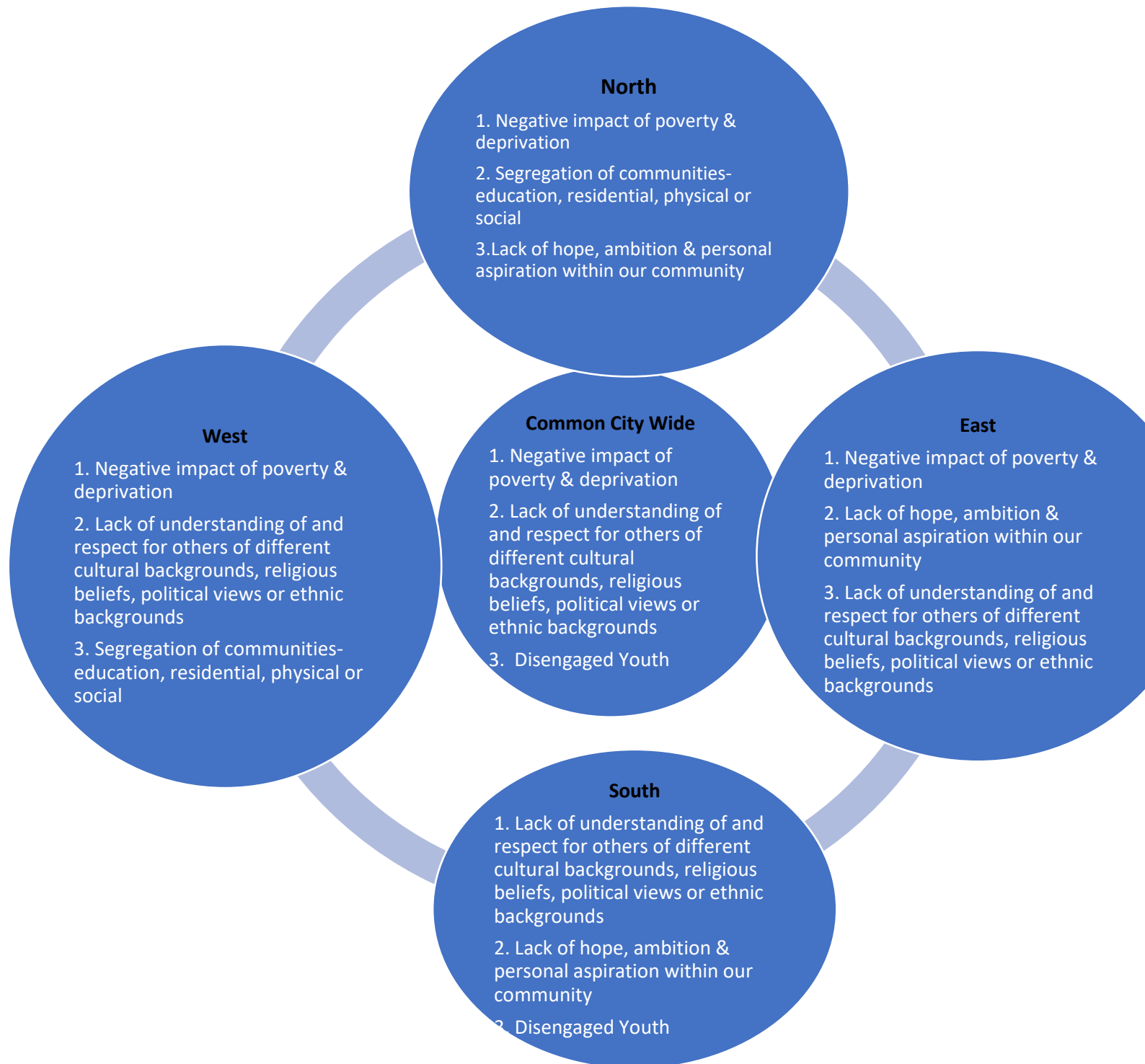
The top 3 high-level geographical based prioritised issues and challenges during Phase 1 engagement are highlighted in the diagram below, this included an assessment based on feedback on what are the overall common city wide challenges. These were consistently reported across stage 1 engagement activity.

Discussions on these priorities highlighted the interconnected nature of these issues and the fact that they cannot be addressed in isolation. Many noted that programmes developed should consider addressing multiple outcomes, building on past successes.

Respondents noted that sport, arts and culture and the environment can act as innovative tools in maximising impact, achieving key peace building outcomes and contributing to lasting attitudinal change for peace and reconciliation.

It is important to re-emphasise that any potential projects that are considered for inclusion under the local action plan must meet the objectives of the PEACEPLUS Programme, for example the negative impact of poverty and deprivation is consistently ranked as the number 1 priority, while the PEACEPLUS Local action plan could contribute to addressing this issue, it may not meet the objectives of the selection criteria set by SEUPB.

Top 3 Issues identified by area



High-Level THEMATIC Based Prioritised Issues and Challenges During Phase 1 Engagement

As referenced earlier, the Stage 1 engagement process included online and public meetings with Section 75 and PEACEPLUS Target Groups on a thematic basis. The following provides a summary of the feedback from respondents as part of Stage 1 Engagement

Comparatively when consulting across the thematic groups, the top issues relatively remained the same as the wider community engagement e.g. the Negative impact of poverty and deprivation ranked as the number 1 priority, however social segregation for this group of respondents ranked in third position. The table below outlines feedback from respondents on thematic groups top issues to be addressed under PEACEPLUS.

1. **Negative impact of poverty & deprivation**
2. **Lack of hope, ambition, and personal aspiration within our community**
3. **Social segregation**
4. **Lack of understanding of different cultural backgrounds**
5. **Disengaged Youth**
6. **Lack of political leadership**
7. **Sectarianism silent/overt**
8. **Educational segregation**

Many of those consulted during the thematic workshop sessions talked about the need for the programme to focus specifically on **the needs of women from different cultural backgrounds**. While they recognised there are some cultural barriers that may hamper the ability of some women to fully integrate into our society, a diverse society is good for the economy and working towards integration programmes that are inclusive and co-designed will be an important factor in engagement in PEACEPLUS. Coupled with this, a lack of childcare prevents many women from being able to acquire an education or upskill or engage in peace projects.

A significant number of respondents noted the wide range of complex societal issues which require education and myth busting support programmes under PEACEPLUS such as addressing discrimination and prejudice in relation to disability, cultural differences, sexuality, race, gender, or religion.

While it may not be the remit of this funding programme, it is worth noting that **Addressing health inequalities and employability prospects** was identified as a focus for those working with many of the PEACEPLUS target groups including men, women, ethnic minority communities, LGBTQIA+, youth, ex-prisoners, victims, and survivors.

The role of churches and faith-based organisations in peace building was highlighted as an area that should be developed further. Respondents noted the need for more collaborative faith/church-based community support activity that acknowledges and recognises the role of this sector in some of the

more pressing social and economic issues and that could act as a bridge within and between communities suffering the same challenging issues. Networking to address poverty related issues such as food, heat, signposting, advice and wrap around services needs to be co-designed and co-delivered to avoid duplication and could be an ideal PEACEPLUS vehicle.

The engagement process noted **the need to hear the voices of victims and survivors** and acknowledge **the past and the legacy of the conflict locally**. The challenges extend to their carers and families, which need to be included in any co-design process. There are many psychological issues for many people who still today live with silent and largely unrecognised trauma and stress. This has had side effects on other members of their families. Linking with existing supports was acknowledged as important.

Post the pandemic many older people lack confidence, are isolated and find it difficult to get back to a sense of safety and normality. Greater inclusion work needs to be undertaken to engage with this target group and build some intergenerational work.

Finally, the need to provide support to ex-prisoners was highlighted for the PEACEPLUS programme. Ex-prisoners need identified included support in the labour market, health and wellbeing and family support services. There is no individual ex-prisoner theme in the PEACEPLUS programme, so it is important in a city like Belfast which has many political ex-prisoners to ensure their needs are supported.

Most of those engaged acknowledged that **building sustainable collaborations and partnerships between communities that develops trust and respect will help to advance the vision for peace and reconciliation beyond 2027 in Belfast**. Building the capacity to collaborate through accredited programmes can assist this.

As outlined above numerous issues and challenges to further developing good relations and peacebuilding have been highlighted.

These issues need to be considered in line with the parameters of the PEACEPLUS Programme to ensure that those included within the Action Plan are eligible for support and will provide maximum benefit to local communities.

Further actions proposed included:

Before, we outline emerging findings from Stage 1 Engagement, it is worth noting that throughout the process a number of general comments were made about specific actions that should be considered as part of PEACEPLUS.

- **A multicultural hub for Belfast**
- **Shared space / multi-faith hub**
- **Events which celebrate different cultures**
- **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) training**
- **Integrated schools**
- **Belfast City Council to have more minority ethnic councilors and staff**
- **Good Relations City Charter**
- **Lobby the Home Office to improve conditions for people seeking asylum**
- **Purpose built LGBTQ+ centre**

SECTION 5: STAGE 1 FINDINGS – EMERGING CONCEPT PROPOSALS FOR PEACEPLUS INVESTMENT

Stage 1 engagement has resulted in a long list of potential initiatives for consideration for PEACEPLUS investment. A summary of high-level concept proposals is presented below aligned to the PEACEPLUS thematic areas, with an indicative budget, allowing for programme administration costs.

Stage 2 of the Action Planning process will further explore concepts in terms of criteria for assessment, eligibility, feasibility and suitability for inclusion in the 1.1 Action Plan.

Theme 1: Community Regeneration & Transformation Indicative Budget - Min 30% £4.5M, Max 40% £6.0M

The local community regeneration and transformation thematic strand will empower local people to regenerate and transform their communities on a cross-community basis. This can involve not only changing the physical appearance of a community but also how it functions.

The physical appearance of a community should reflect the sense of pride and potential therein. Considered and strategic physical regeneration can change how people feel about their local area, as well as how they use it.

Thriving communities should provide physical spaces in which people can spend time together, as well as receive vital services. Regeneration can be used as an opportunity to visually reflect the character and shared heritage of an area. Projects should create pathways for increased levels of cross community integration. The following is a list of some of the initial potential ideas that came out of Stage 1 Engagement, further work is required to test some of these ideas and other emerging ideas via the parameters that will be used for assessing projects for inclusion within the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan

EMERGING CONCEPT PROPOSALS

- **Small scale investment in communities including those with low capacity** / community infrastructure, areas not previously engaged in Peace - community gardens, greenspaces, alleyway schemes, walkways, environmental enhancements, buildings / facilities, dereliction, shared spaces. Potential to align with a community capacity building programme.
- **Regeneration/Creation/Extension of Green Open Spaces including Parks, Greenways, and wider green spaces**
- **Embrace the river** - strengthening connections from the city centre its surrounding communities – enhancing connectivity across and around the River Lagan
- Focus on creating a liveable **city centre** – green space, play areas, outdoor living, safe space, vibrant public shared & inclusive spaces
- **Reimagining** of derelict sites / buildings e.g., Shankill, North Belfast
- Capital investment at **Interfaces / Peace Walls**
- Community Hubs
- **Alignment of projects with** Peace & Reconciliation capital scheme
- **Urban sports** facilities

Theme 2: Thriving & Peaceful Communities

Indicative Budget - Min 30% £4.5M, Max 40% £6.0M

Thriving and peaceful communities are defined by people with high levels of individual wellbeing; who manage strong relationships and connections; and are empowered to lead targeted and transformative programmes.

This theme will invest in cross community collaboration to (i) jointly identify issues and opportunities in their areas; and (ii) codevelop collaborative projects to address these and bring about positive change in their communities. It will build and sustain relationships between people from different communities, across a wide range of sectors. The Programme will result in an increased number of coordinated, community-led responses to challenges in areas which experience high levels of economic and social disadvantage.

The following is a list of some of the initial ideas that came out of Stage 1 Engagement, further work is required to test some of these potential ideas and other emerging ideas via the parameters that will be used for assessing projects for inclusion within the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan.

EMERGING CONCEPT PROPOSALS

- **Community capacity building** & mentoring programme in areas of weak community infrastructure
- **Transformative Leadership** Programme (build on Peace IV model) – extend wider than interface areas
- **Single identity work** with communities who have not previously engaged / had limited engagement with peace and reconciliation
- **Community arts** programme (build on Peace IV model & community good practice) – cross community and intercultural
- **Skills & employability** programme to address gaps in provision with a focus on e.g., work placement, resilience, skills, enhanced support, ACE scheme, NEETs, economically inactive, disability employment support
- **Shared spaces animation** programme
- **Health and wellbeing** programme in disadvantaged areas with a focus on mental health, resilience and addressing issues relating to current economic climate
- **Older people's initiatives** addressing health & wellbeing, men's activities, inclusion of LGBT & ethnic minorities, intergenerational activity
- **Youth** programme(s) building on Peace IV model and focusing on e.g., disengaged youth, leadership, resilience, ambition & aspiration, civic responsibility, mental health, skills, employability, holistic support, LGBTQ, family focused activities, young people with disabilities
- **Sports** programme promoting active communities
- **Church led cross community leadership** / supporting vulnerable communities programme
- Activities that **build on / sustain cross community activity**

Theme 3: Building Respect for All Cultural Identities

Indicative Budget Min 20% £3.0M

Cultural diversity means the existence of a variety of cultural or ethnic groups within our communities. It has a broad definition which encompasses a range of population differences including race; ethnicity; age; ability; language; nationality; economic status; gender; religion; and sexual orientation. The Programme area has become increasingly culturally diverse in recent years and there is a need to invest in programmes which increase understanding of and respect for all cultural identities.

PEACEPLUS will place particular emphasis on providing support to those most marginalised within our communities.

The following is a list of some of the initial ideas that came out of Stage 1 Engagement, further work is required to test some of these ideas and other emerging ideas via the parameters that will be used for assessing projects for inclusion within the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan.

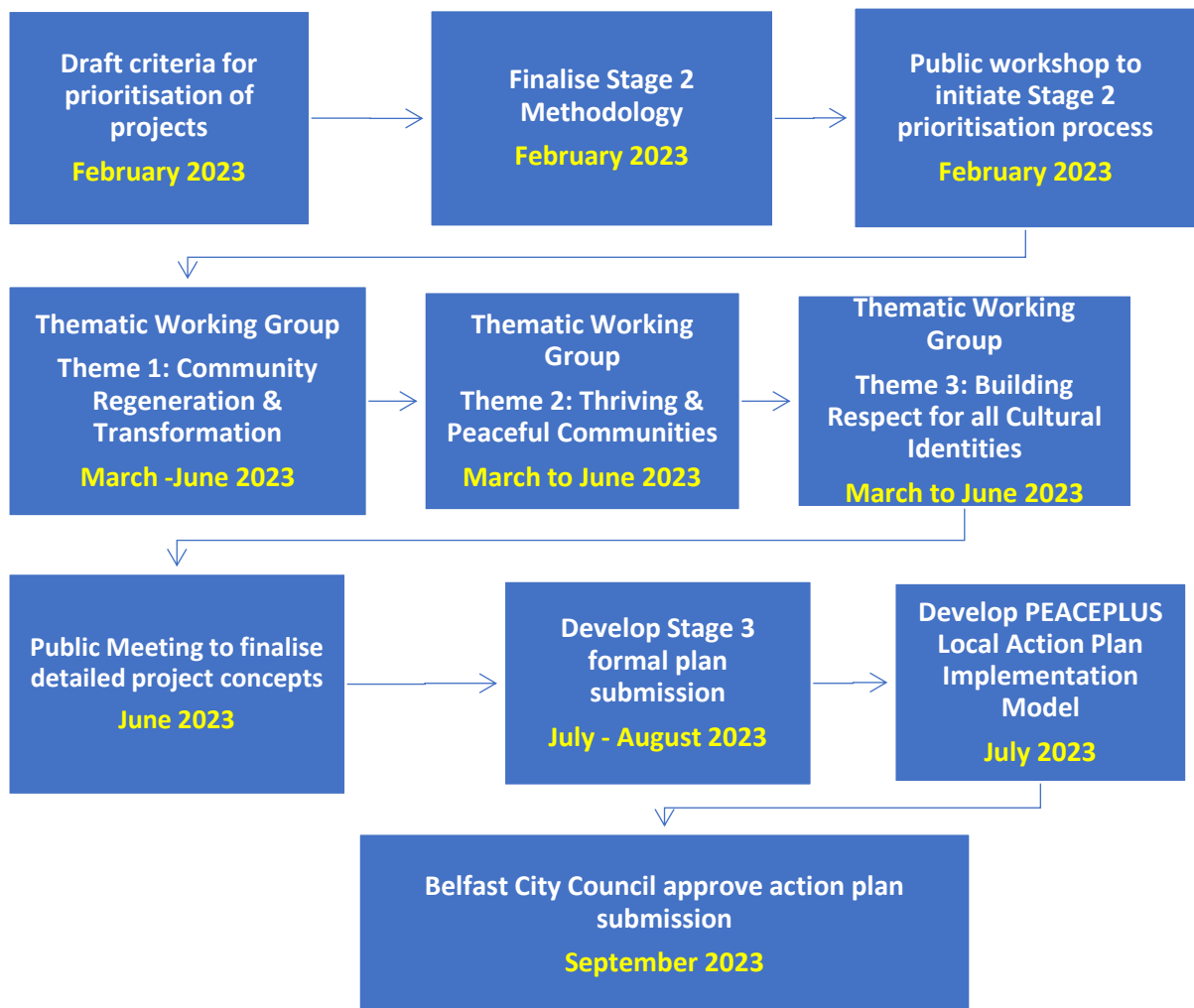
CONCEPT PROPOSALS

- **Anti-sectarianism** programme
- **Anti-racism** programme(s)
- **Ethnic minority support** programme – language services, employability, entrepreneurship, adult education, school education, youth inclusion & integration with a school's focus, leadership, social integration programme
- **Community festivals / events** celebrating multi-cultural diversity
- **Parks - Animation** Programme bringing communities together
- **Cultural heritage** programme
- **Ex-prisoner** programme (employment, family support, health and wellbeing, advocacy services)
- **Cross community confidence building** programme / activities at interface areas

SECTION 6: NEXT STEPS

At the time of stage 1 engagement, the public call for Theme 1.1 Co-designed Local Community Peace Action Plans is not open. It is anticipated SEUPB will issue a call in Spring of 2023. However, SEUPB advice is for Councils to proceed with their action plan co-design process in order to be well advanced when the call is made.

It is planned that development of the action plan will be facilitated over the period January to September 2023, Next Steps are illustrated below.



At all stages the Shared City Partnership will lead and support the Council team agree the parameters and details of the prioritisation process and ensure these meet the requirements as laid out by SEUPB. Projects supported by the PEACEPLUS Action Plan must deliver on a cross community basis and result in shared and inclusive local services, facilities and spaces that will make a significant and lasting contribution to peace and reconciliation.

It is recognised that in some instances individual communities from areas most impacted by the conflict may require investment in single identity work. In this instance the project must clearly demonstrate how activity will lead to subsequent cross community and/or cross border contact and contribute to PEACEPLUS objectives.

For Stage 2, we will work with stakeholders to start to identify which projects could be included in a local peace action plan submission. Stakeholder engagement is critical and in addition to public workshops it is proposed that we will work with smaller groups of our stakeholders to develop the detail around projects on a thematic basis.. We will also continue to have wider engagement with residents, local organisations, government bodies and potential beneficiaries of PEACEPLUS funding.

The next Stage will build upon the extensive engagement exercise already provided between June and December 2022 with the aim of submitting a PEACEPLUS plan which contributes to a more peaceful, cohesive and shared city.

APPENDIX 1 STAGE 1 ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOPS

Workshops	No Workshops	Nos Engaged
Public information Sessions (June 22)	5	63
City Wide City Hall Event	1	72
West Belfast	5	26
North Belfast	3	17
East Belfast	3	30
South Belfast	2	33
Section 75 & PEACEPLUS target groups	13	95
Belfast City Council Departments	5	45
TOTAL	37	381

Workshops were facilitated by external independent facilitators and Council officers and covered the following format:

- Overview of the new PEACEPLUS Programme in particular Theme 1.1 - the co-designed Local Community Action Plans
- Identification of the remaining peace building issues / challenges across the city
- Identification of opportunities for peace building
- Identification of and discussion on the type of projects that could benefit from PEACEPLUS investment across the three thematic strands
- Ideas on the differences that the investment could create for Belfast – to help with the development of a vision and outcomes for the plan
- The identification of any barriers that participants believed needed to be addressed in making it easier to engage in the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan.

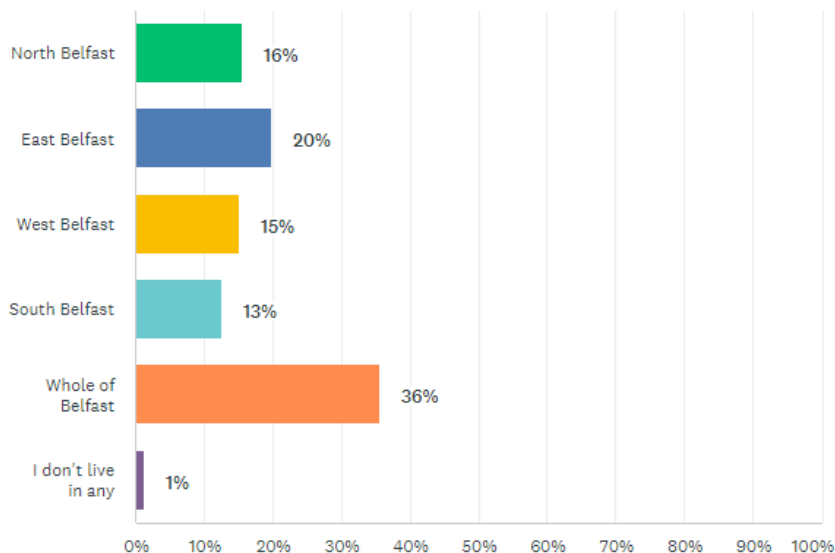
In most workshops an online mobile enabled engagement tool was used called Slido. This allowed people to engage in discussions anonymously and to see emerging priorities as the workshop progressed. This technique worked well and enabled all participants to engage in the workshop discussion. For those who did not have a mobile, paper versions of the questions and response options were available. These were collected after the workshop and inputted to the results.

In total, **381** attendees participated in the Stage 1 Engagement Process.

169 Completed the online survey

APPENDIX 2 SURVEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

Stage 1 interim online survey results indicators. The survey received 169 responses. Responses show good representation from a geographic and thematic groups perspective from across the city.



The main good relations / peace and reconciliation issues in the city/your local area (top 6)

1. Lack of understanding of and respect for others of different cultural backgrounds, religious beliefs, political views or ethnic backgrounds
2. Negative impact of poverty & deprivation
3. Lack of political leadership
4. Paramilitarism/criminality
5. Polarised communities
6. Lack of hope, ambition & personal aspiration within our community

Comments on issues from across the city included:

- Religious beliefs/organisations history of Ireland passed down (through the talk in homes and Churches etc) to generations who keep following what they consider traditional.
- Community resilience and wellbeing
- Lack of vibrant community, arts and local business that create a sense of shared space, civic pride and belonging
- Poor housing stock, lack of ambition, little focus on physical regeneration
- People not having opportunities to work together to solve difficult problems at a local level.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q - How should PEACEPLUS 1.1 Local Community Action Plan funding be invested under each theme to ensure maximum peace impact

Investment areas are listed, and comments included for summary purposes. These are not exhaustive but high-level overviews of information captured to date.

THEME 1 COMMUNITY REGENERATION & TRANSFORMATION	
Top 6 suggestions for investment into physical spaces/capital peace projects	Comments on investment into physical spaces/capital peace projects:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reimagining public spaces 2. Larger capital schemes 3. Environmental schemes, parks and greenways 4. Local community shared spaces 5. City Centre investment 6. Building/community facility improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement/transformation of interface areas. Regeneration / investment at interface sites • Reduce some of the local dereliction Improve the streetscape Invest in the physical infrastructure of the area • Providing innovative spaces within public owned parks for re recreational use by everyone • Downtown Belfast needs cleaned up to encourage people to return • Disability access should be improved in facilities new and existing

THEME 2 THRIVING & PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES	
Top 6 suggestions for investment into cross community engagement programmes	Comments on investment into cross community engagement programmes:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Culture & heritage awareness initiatives 2. Diversionary activities for those at risk of paramilitary influence 3. Environment programmes 4. Programmes that support those most marginalised within the community (e.g., women, men, older people, youth, LGBTQIA+, those living with a disability, ethnic minority communities) 5. Leadership programmes 6. Sports programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-sectarianism training should be mandatory for anyone or any group funded via this programme • Volunteering programmes to build volunteering across the city • None of these will work while education is segregated, economic deprivation, systemic inequality and inter-generational trauma is not funded and addressed • Money should be transformative to make a real change - not just gap funding or funding same old (except youth workers based on objective need) • Support initiatives to work with those long-term unemployed/economically inactive

THEME 3 BUILDING RESPECT FOR ALL CULTURAL IDENTITIES

Top 6 suggestions for investment into thematic cultural identities programmes	Comments on investment into thematic cultural identities programmes:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. History and heritage programmes 2. Church, faith, and belief initiatives 3. Multi-cultural awareness, respect and diversity programmes 4. Initiatives with a disability focus 5. Programmes that support victims and survivors of the conflict 6. Programmes for ex security force members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully support history projects that would create an greater understanding for communities; working together through history and cultural groups. Make use of Tour Guide associations • Programmes that are accessible to all (ex prisoners/ marginalised, etc) • Build capacity of people from marginalised communities, and invest in grassroot groups, to support their ability to fully participate in, inform and shape the vision of a thriving/peaceful NI. Work to ensure representation of marginalised communities across civic society - ‘we will not be, what we cannot see’. Develop and support Intercultural competency and Anti-racist Training to increase understanding of everyone involved in shaping, delivering and participating in Peace Plus Projects • Identifying clients for individual programmes inevitably leaves someone out and it creates a hierarchy of provision. Design arts & heritage educational projects that give voice to those who are marginalised.

Q - Do you foresee any barriers or challenges to your community or group engaging in any of the PEACEPLUS Programmes that we need to consider?

- Administration and timing of money allocation
- That the projects will not be flexible to community needs - PEACEPLUS runs until 2027 and today’s issues will differ to issues in 2027, the projects must be flexible enough to meet these new emerging needs.
- Mental and physical barriers, people still are affected by the effects of the conflict.
- Translation / interpretation needed
- Getting access to particular ethnic groups
- People’s beliefs and cultural differences can be a hindrance.