



Belfast Stories Equality Impact Assessment

Final Decision Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between 10 August and 20 November 2022, Belfast City Council carried out a 14-week public consultation on Belfast Stories, a new visitor attraction due to open in the city centre in 2028, and its accompanying equality impact assessment (EQIA).

This EQIA final decision report sets out:

- the initial findings from the draft EQIA report
- the results of the consultation process
- conclusions
- recommendations for monitoring any adverse impacts

ABOUT BELFAST STORIES

Funded by the Belfast City Region Deal and Belfast City Council, Belfast Stories will open at the former Bank of Ireland buildings, 92 Royal Avenue (where North Street and Royal Avenue meet) by 2028. It aims to attract both tourists and locals while helping to regenerate the city and surrounding areas.

There are three main parts to the visitor centre: stories, screen and social.

1. STORIES

These will be first-person accounts of the city. The stories will be discovered through an ambitious citywide story collection programme that will include:

- uncovering the stories that are already held by museums, archives, local history groups, communities and others
- collecting new stories, particularly those people and groups whose stories may not yet have been heard

The stories will be exhibited using a range of media in 2,000m² of exhibition space including a library of stories, a main exhibition space and temporary exhibition spaces. Visitors will be guided through the space by a trail which will end at a viewing platform on top of the building where they can reflect on the story of the whole city.

2. SCREEN

Belfast Stories film centre will house a state-of-the-art five-screen cinema offering and NI's digital screen archive. The film centre will also support the local film industry with developmental space, flexible learning spaces and a story lab. There will be a particular focus on children and young people.

3. SOCIAL

The exhibition space and film centre will be connected by public spaces where people can meet, eat, shop and relax. These will include:

- a central open-air courtyard
- pocket squares and laneways
- roof gardens
- cafes, restaurants and bars sharing local produce and cuisine – Belfast’s “food story”
- shops selling local products

THE STORY COLLECTION PRINCIPLES AND THEMES

The purpose of the Story Collection Framework is to help gather, sort and celebrate a wealth of Belfast stories without being constraining. There are seven themes, each with between 11 to 16 subthemes. Stories can be about the past, present or future. Stories may fit under more than one theme. If stories do not fit under a particular subtheme, a new one can be created.

ABOUT THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The 14-week public consultation focused on:

1. raising awareness of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development and
2. gathering ideas and evidence to help shape the design brief to make sure that the building is welcoming and accessible and everyone can see themselves reflected in its stories

An online consultation hub was created on Belfast City Council’s Your Say platform. It included a survey inviting feedback on the Belfast Stories proposal and draft EQIA and copies of the consultation document in a range of formats including HTML, Easy Read, British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL).

The council’s Equality Scheme consultees were notified of the public consultation and draft EQIA and invited to comment. The Belfast Stories equity steering group, comprising 10 experts by experience (including people from Black, Asian, Middle Eastern, inner city, working class and LGBTQ+ backgrounds; older and younger people; disabled and neurodiverse people; and people with caring responsibilities) met four times. Sixteen workshops were facilitated with people and groups who are generally less heard or more at risk of missing out, and 10 one-to-one meetings were held with organisations representing or advocating for such people or groups.

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment

There were 31 workshops with the film, tourism, arts, heritage, voluntary and community, Irish language and public sectors, engaging 238 representatives.

In August 2022, Belfast City Council appointed thrive, the audience development agency for NI, and Daisy Chain Inc, a creative consultancy, to help raise awareness and build excitement including through on-street interviews, events and workshops. They engaged a total of 683 participants.

There were also four public meetings in the north, south, east and west of the city, which were attended by 15 participants.

Leaflets and information were distributed across the city including pop-ups and display boards exhibited at a range of venues.

Written submissions were also received from seven organisations.

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

The Belfast Stories engagement plan sets out plans for ongoing engagement structured around four work strands:

1. Equity. Equity recognises that not everyone starts from the same place. It gives people the different resources and opportunities they need to take part.
2. Sustainability. The purpose of this strand is to make sure that Belfast Stories is green and sustainable. It will bring together environmental, tourism, culture and economic development stakeholders.
3. Partnership. The city stakeholders network will be open to any organisation with an interest in Belfast Stories.
4. Experiences. This strand will bring together stakeholders around the stories, screen and social elements of the concept.

There are also two more planned public consultations: in autumn 2023 on the concept design and in late 2024/early 2025 as part of planning permission.

CONSIDERATION OF AVAILABLE DATA AND RESEARCH

This section provides an overview of the data and research that was considered in the draft EQIA report.

DEMOGRAPHIC MAKE-UP OF BELFAST'S RESIDENT POPULATION

The draft EQIA provided a breakdown of Belfast's resident population drawn from the most up-to-date data available when the draft EQIA report was being prepared.

COUNCIL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment

The draft EQIA provided an overview of relevant Belfast City Council policies and strategies. This included its:

- Equality Scheme (2021)
- Language Strategy (2018)
- Good Relations Strategy (2019)
- Belfast Agenda (2017)
- Corporate Plan (2019)
- City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (2015)
- A City Imagining cultural strategy (2020)
- Make Yourself at Home tourism strategy (2022)
- Consultation and Engagement Framework (2020)

FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATION TO DATE

Engagement around the concept of a Belfast Stories has been ongoing since 2014 when the need for a second major visitor attraction in the city was identified. Belfast Stories has subsequently been formally consulted on during a range of public consultations. The concept was broadly welcomed. Findings relevant to the draft EQIA included:

- Cost may be a barrier, particularly to families and younger people
- Transportation can be a barrier, particularly for older people
- Need to follow inclusive design principles
- Equality considerations should “go beyond” the statutory requirements

EQUALITY FRAMEWORK

Belfast Stories’ Equality Framework was developed in 2021. It recognises that the project’s vision cannot be achieved unless equality, diversity and inclusion are placed at its core and supported by co-design and an inclusive process throughout all stages of development.

It recommends that engagement be:

“an ongoing cumulative process, enabling relationships, building trust and strengthening links over time [...] Residents, voluntary and community groups, specialists and concerned or interested individuals, may want to participate at a range of levels – from providing advice to co-designing the process, undertaking some aspects of the engagement to delivering projects to meet some of the outcomes.”

It also recommends that equality screening and impact assessments should be carried out at different stages and on different elements of the project.

EQUALITY SCREENING

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment

Belfast City Council's equality screening of the Belfast Stories outline business case found that:

“There is nothing inherent in the principles underpinning the concept of the Belfast Stories to indicate an adverse impact on one or more of the Section 75 groups. Instead, the concept will follow inclusivity principles for all residents and visitors [...] will bring about advantages to Belfast citizens irrespective of their identity.”

However, it continues “The Belfast Stories aspects of this project needs to ensure equal representation of residents and visitors of different [identities]”. It recommended that an EQIA should be carried out, potentially at key milestones such as concept, design and content stages.

DRAFT STORY COLLECTION FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION

The draft Story Collection Framework was developed by Lord Cultural Resources in 2021 in consultation with over 50 stakeholders including representatives from museums, libraries, archives and other collections. Consultees identified voices that are more likely to be missing from or underrepresented in current stories and collections.

ENGAGEMENT WITH CULTURE AMONG EQUALITY GROUPS

Belfast Stories will use expressions of culture to attract visitors. The draft EQIA considered how different people and groups across the different Section 75 equality categories may engage differently with culture.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

In accordance with the EQIA process, having gathered information on the policy and those affected, Belfast City Council then assessed:

1. whether there is likely to be a differential impact on one or more of the equality groups;
2. the extent of differential impact; and
3. whether that impact is adverse.

In the draft EQIA report, Belfast City Council considered the following potential impacts.

Barriers that particular groups face to activity that is similar in nature to Belfast Stories include emotional barriers (such as anxiety or discomfort); interest barriers (not relevant, don't know what's available); practical barriers (cost, transport); and societal barriers (racism, ableism).

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment

The Belfast Stories' Equality Framework established the broad parameters to help ensure that barriers are removed and equality, diversity and inclusion remain at the heart of the project's development.

Belfast Stories' engagement plan and draft Story Collection Framework builds on this foundation. These identify groups who are less likely to access or feel represented in Belfast Stories and sets down a range of actions to mitigate potential differential impact.

Central to this is the equity steering group, which brings together representatives from the nine equality groups to co-design further engagement and opportunities to promote equal opportunities and good relations. This group will also support the wider engagement plan and influence the design of the building and plans for the collection, curation and exhibition of its stories, making it accessible, welcoming and representative for all.

Other planned mitigations include:

- a concentrated period of public consultation aimed at making the building welcoming and accessible and ensuring everyone can see themselves reflected in its stories
- consultation with the council's Equality Consultative Forum and other key organisations representing protected groups of people not engaged through any other method
- information available in written, visual and Easy Read formats and other formats on request
- a range of tailored engagement tools from online surveys and quizzes to focus groups, creative workshops and hard-hat tours
- substantial ongoing engagement including around the theme of equity
- further public consultation and equality screening
- monitoring engagement across different Section 75 groups

The assessment of impacts in draft EQIA concluded that with equality, diversity and inclusion embedded in its development and extensive planned engagement including around the theme of equity, Belfast Stories has the potential to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity and good relations across all Section 75 categories.

The public consultation welcomed further evidence of any impacts on Section 75 groups, which would be collated and analysed to produce this final EQIA decision report.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

SURVEY RESPONSES IN RELATION TO THE DRAFT EQIA

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment

One hundred and twenty-seven people responded to the survey on the Your Say Belfast consultation website.¹ Of those, 50 answered questions specifically on the draft EQIA.

50 per cent of respondents agreed with the **assessment of impacts**; 8 per cent disagreed; and 30.0 per cent responded “Don’t know”.² Reasons given by those who disagreed with the assessment of impacts were:

- “not all sides get listened to.”
- “Let’s break down the various communities and see what might appeal to the public at large. Taxpayers that vote in the council and pay for it. The project must cater to those that have shaped Belfast”
- “I have not read into the policy and data to make my own mind up on this question. Further open access research needs to be available and open to public.”

There were 17 responses to the question **“Are you aware of any other impacts that we haven't identified?”** including 11 responses (64.7 per cent) stating that they could not identify additional impacts. One response reinforced the opportunity to improve good relations.

There were 14 responses to the question **“Are you aware of any other evidence or research that may be relevant to Belfast Stories impact assessment?”**. Of these, 11 (78.6 per cent) were unaware of additional evidence.

There were 25 responses to the question **“What else could we do to promote equality of opportunity and good relations?”**. Accordingly:

- 7 responses emphasised the importance of consultation and engagement, and 4 listed additional groups they felt should be engaged. There were homeless people, care homes, “advocacy agencies” and primary schools.
- 2 respondents emphasised the need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation
- 2 responses felt that Belfast Stories should be wider than Belfast
- Suggestions to promote good relations included ensuring there is political balance; using arts and festivals to promote good relations; and challenging received narratives.

RELEVANT FINDINGS FROM WIDER ENGAGEMENT

The following section summarises relevant findings from the overall public consultation including the survey, meetings, workshops, focus groups and interviews.

BUILDING THE EXCITEMENT

¹ See appendix 6 for a list of organisations that responded via the survey

² 12.0 per cent gave no response

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment

Across all engagement strands, there was remarkable excitement about the concept of Belfast Stories. For example, in survey responses, 81.6 per cent of survey respondents said they were excited about Belfast Stories, with 43.2 per cent saying they felt “very” excited.³

Reasons people felt excited included:

- recognition of an opportunity to change the usual negative, narrow or “us and them” narrative of Belfast. (“Think it's a great opportunity to tell stories of the city and its people that transcend tired and unrepresentative binary views.”)
- a potential boost to pride at both civic and individual level particularly among Section 75 groups

Among those who were not excited or disagreed strongly with the concept, the main concern was that the investment would be better spent elsewhere or is diverting funding from other priorities, such as preserving other heritage buildings.

BARRIERS THAT WOULD STOP PEOPLE VISITING THE BUILDING

Across all engagement strands, barriers identified that would stop people accessing the building included:

- Cost
- That the building might not be welcoming “for the likes of us” including young people and people from minoritized ethnic communities
- Lack of activity for children and families
- Safety and fear of anti-social behaviour. This was a greater issue for older people, disabled people and people from minoritized ethnic and LGBTQ+ communities.
- Transport. This was a major concern, particularly among older people, disabled people, minoritized ethnic communities, carers and people living in working class areas.
- Building design. This was of particular concern to older people, neurodiverse people and disabled people.
- Unilingual signage. This was felt to be a particular barrier for the Irish language community.

For carers and disabled people, a good practice buddy ticketing system was considered essential. It was also felt that older people may need more encouragement to go out after the pandemic.

BARRIERS THAT WOULD STOP PEOPLE VISITING THE EXHIBITION

³ n=125

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment

Barriers identified across all engagement strands that might stop people enjoying the exhibition included:

- Cost
- Lack of interest or relevance
- Different language and literacy abilities
- Triggering content, including “Dark stories” that could traumatise or retraumatise, flashing images and loud noises
- Lack of outreach
- Marketing that is not inclusive of diverse communities.

BARRIERS THAT WOULD STOP PEOPLE TELLING THEIR STORIES

The survey asked “What might stop you telling your story?”. The most frequent barrier identified related to perceived lack of inclusivity, identified by 18 people, followed by “Nothing”, identified by 14 people.⁴

In practice, during workshops and other in-person engagement, the vast majority of people were very willing to tell their stories.

Generally, young women appeared more reticent than young men, and women more reticent than men in general.

Some people indicated that they would be more comfortable telling their story to another person. This would help overcome barriers including different literacy and language abilities. Others would like to write or record their own story privately, particularly those with sensitive or traumatic stories to tell. Group dynamics helped some overcome initial reticence.

While the majority of participants in the consultation had little reticence sharing their stories with the facilitators during the public consultation (who were generally unknown to the participants), many of the workshops were organised or supported by trusted intermediaries, whether a local community group or respected individual “of” that community, which helped reassure participants.

Some would be happy to have their words used, but not their voice (because they dislike the sound of their voice on recordings); others would be happy to have their voice used, but not their face. Several consultees, particularly among minoritized ethnic groups and young people, wondered whether they could use an avatar instead.

⁴ n=87

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment

There was concern that the collection process could be difficult or cumbersome, particularly for those with different literacy or memory loss.

Another barrier that emerged through in-person engagement was storytelling fatigue. Many people's stories have already been collected through community groups, reminiscence projects and so on. In general, participants indicated they would prefer that this activity is shared or showcased, rather than stories recorded anew.

PEOPLE AT PARTICULAR RISK OF MISSING OUT

The role of the community and voluntary sector as trusted intermediaries to engage people, was emphasised throughout the consultation.

Over two thirds of survey respondents (68 per cent) agreed that we had identified the right people to be part of the equity steering group. Other suggestions for the equity steering group included:

- Migrant communities
- People with refugee status or seeking asylum
- Men
- Middle-aged men
- The very elderly
- Students
- People of no faith
- Integrated education alumni
- Irish speakers
- Those who no longer live in Belfast or NI
- Parents
- Foster carers and guardians
- Younger children
- People with care experience
- Underprivileged children
- Long-term unemployed
- Different socio-economic classes, in particular people living in poverty
- "Normal working every day people"
- "Less educated people who struggle to read large blocks of text"
- Blind people
- People with dementia
- People from geographic communities
- People living at interfaces
- Homeless people
- Drug addicts
- Tourists
- People who are not affiliated to groups

Some respondents considered more “professional” expertise would be advantageous. Others were concerned that the equality focus was misguided or that the steering group was “box ticking” or “woke”.

RESPONSES IN RELATION TO THE IRISH LANGUAGE

Belfast City Council hosted an Irish language consultation session, which was attended by 19 representatives. There were also three written submissions on behalf of the Irish language sector.

Consultees “warmly welcome[d]” Belfast Stories and were “hugely encouraged by the commitment to include diverse stories representing the different identities and people that make up our wonderful city”. However, there were concerns that “the Irish language community have been, so far, completely omitted from the Belfast Stories concept”.

Consultees considered that including Irish language in Belfast Stories would welcome the Irish language community while fostering good relations by “normalising the language”.

While there was recognition that Irish as a native minority language should not be categorised with other minority groups, it was also suggested that there should be “members of the Irish language community on the project’s equity steering group, given that all other minority groups across the city are represented.”

Other suggestions from the Irish language sector included:

1. That Irish language is woven throughout the Belfast Stories themes, including celebration, diversity, education and the story of the language itself.
2. There should be bilingual resources throughout Belfast Stories including external and internal signage, exhibitions, marketing and other materials.
3. The council should develop and implement a language screening assessment for all new council policies, practices and projects.

RESPONSES IN RELATION TO ULSTER SCOTS

A meeting was held with the Ulster Scots Agency, and the Ulster Scots Community Network also participated in a consultation workshop.

The opportunity to foster further understanding the cultural identity of Ulster Scots was broadly welcomed. It was felt that this should include stories of the language, of “celebrated” and “lesser known” individuals, of industrial heritage and diaspora and international connections.

In general throughout the public consultation, there was concern that there could be an imbalance or bias in content and presentation. One consultee also welcomed further

reflection of other Ulster identities and ancestries (for example, Anglo-Ulster, Franco and Italianate).

CONCLUSIONS

This information has been brought together in this report in order to ensure that Belfast City Council is in a position to take account of all issues when making a decision in relation to Belfast Stories. The following analysis of the key points arising from the EQIA and the consultation responses is provided to assist the council, but it is not exhaustive and is not meant to be a substitute for the detailed information presented in this report.

SUPPORT FOR THE BELFAST STORIES CONCEPT

During the public consultation, Belfast Stories' engagement plan ensured that Belfast City Council gathered feedback across a broad range of equality groups, and there were exceptionally high levels of support, including across all Section 75 equality categories. Many consultees also reflected on the potential positive impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

Nevertheless, there were concerns that Belfast Stories could present a partisan, binary or narrow perspective of Belfast that would exclude the stories or identities of particular groups. The council should continue to embed equality, diversity and inclusion in the development of Belfast Stories, ensuring that early potential for positive impact can be realised throughout the project design, delivery and implementation.

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

During the public consultation, consultees offered further insight in relation to groups of people at risk of missing out and tactics to mitigate potential differential impact.

Tactics to engage people at risk of missing out are considered and included in the engagement plan. Ongoing engagement should continue to focus on those most at risk of missing out, and the engagement plan and stakeholder mapping should be reviewed and revised in light of lessons learned and additional evidence uncovered during the public consultation.

STORY COLLECTION

Belfast City Council plans to start story collection in spring 2023. The engagement plan includes recommendations for engaging around story collection. This should focus on action learning by testing processes and tools with groups that are less likely to share stories (because of their culture, identity or circumstance), in particular older people and the very elderly whose stories are otherwise at risk of being lost.

The Belfast Stories concept was broadly welcomed by the Irish language community as an opportunity to explore and celebrate the history of the language and the city's Irish language community. This may in turn enhance good relations by affording respect and recognition to a native minority language in keeping with local and international policy and best practice.

Belfast City Council should continue to consult closely with Irish language and Ulster Scots stakeholders, including in relation to the development of the building, story collection, exhibition and overall experience. Resulting language policy or practice should be subject to an equality screening and (if required) a full equality impact assessment.

MONITORING FOR ADVERSE IMPACT

Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires that a system be established to monitor the impact of the final policy in order to find out its effect on the relevant groups within the equality categories.

Belfast City Council plans to continue to monitor impact throughout the development of Belfast Stories and review it at least annually including:

- at the end of this public consultation period, when the draft EQIA report will be revised, taking into account comments received during the consultation, and a final EQIA report will be prepared for Belfast City Council. The results of the EQIA will be published on the council's website and intranet and in its annual report to the Equality Commission.
- in August 2023 when a report on this stage of the engagement process (design brief to concept design) will be prepared and published on the council's website
- in autumn 2023 when a further equality screening will be carried out in advance of a public consultation on the concept design
- between August 2024 and February 2025 when a further equality screening will be carried out as part of the planning permission and public consultation process

The results of monitoring will be included in Belfast City Council's annual review on progress to the Equality Commission and in line with the council's Equality Scheme. If the monitoring and analysis over a two-year period show a greater adverse impact than predicted or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, Belfast City Council will take measures to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups.

1. INTRODUCTION

Between 10 August and 20 November 2022, Belfast City Council carried out a 14-week public consultation on Belfast Stories, a planned new visitor attraction due to open in the city centre in 2028, and its accompanying equality impact assessment (EQIA). The public consultation focused on:

1. raising awareness of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development and
2. gathering ideas and evidence to help shape the design brief to make sure that the building is welcoming and accessible and everyone can see themselves reflected in its stories

During the consultation period, the draft EQIA report was available on Belfast City Council's Your Say consultation website. This included a survey inviting feedback on the Belfast Stories proposal and draft EQIA. The council's Equality Scheme consultees (appendix 1) were notified of the draft EQIA and invited to comment. Leaflets and information were distributed across the city including pop-ups and display boards exhibited at Clifton House, Girdwood Community Hub, Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre, Crescent Arts Centre, Ulster University, the Spectrum Centre, EastSide Visitor Centre and the James Connolly Visitor Centre. There were also 65 consultation workshops and meetings with a range of stakeholders (see appendix 2).

This EQIA final decision report sets out:

- the initial findings from the draft EQIA report
- the results of the consultation process
- conclusions
- recommendations for monitoring any adverse impacts

2. THE POLICY

ABOUT BELFAST STORIES

In December 2021, Belfast City Council announced its plans for a new visitor attraction in Belfast city centre.

Funded by the Belfast City Region Deal and Belfast City Council, Belfast Stories will open at the former Bank of Ireland buildings, 92 Royal Avenue (where North Street and Royal Avenue meet) by 2028. It aims to attract both tourists and locals while helping to regenerate the city and surrounding areas.

There are three main parts to the visitor centre: stories, screen and social.

STORIES

These will be first-person accounts of the city by the people who call it home.

These stories will be discovered through an ambitious citywide story collection programme that will include:

- uncovering the stories that are already held by museums, archives, local history groups, communities and others
- collecting new stories, particularly those people and groups whose stories may not yet have been heard

The stories will be exhibited using a range of media – words, pictures, photographs, animation, film, virtual technology and so on – in 2,000m² of exhibition space including a library of stories, a main exhibition space and temporary exhibition spaces. Visitors will be guided through the space by a trail which will end at a viewing platform on top of the building where they can reflect on the story of the whole city.

SCREEN

Belfast Stories film centre will house a state-of-the-art five-screen cinema (including an outdoor screen), offering, for example, premieres and new releases from around the world, film festivals and special events.

It will also contain NI's digital screen archive, which visitors can explore, supported by a year-round programme of talks and interactive events.

The film centre will also support the local film industry with developmental space, flexible learning spaces and a story lab. There will be a particular focus on children and young people.

SOCIAL

The exhibition space and film centre will be connected by public spaces where people can meet, eat, shop and relax. These will include:

- a central open-air courtyard
- pocket squares and laneways
- roof gardens
- cafes, restaurants and bars sharing local produce and cuisine – Belfast’s “food story”
- shops selling local products

These spaces will be brought to life through a programme of events, pop-up shops and street food.

THE STORY COLLECTION PRINCIPLES AND THEMES

A draft Story Collection Framework was developed by Lord Cultural Resources in consultation with over 50 stakeholders in 2021.

The purpose of the framework is to help gather, sort and celebrate a wealth of Belfast stories without being constraining. It is essential that the Story Collection Framework is inclusive of different people and groups so that they will share their stories.

Stories will be told in the first person to keep their distinctive, human and relatable voice, told from a personal point of view rather than by an official or authority.

Stories can be about the past, present or future, and there are seven themes:

- i. Home
- ii. Resilient
- iii. Place
- iv. Change
- v. Innovative
- vi. Authentic
- vii. Creative

Each theme has between 11 to 16 subthemes, but the framework is designed to be flexible. Stories may fit under more than one theme. If stories do not fit under a particular subtheme, a new one can be created.

Stories will be mostly Belfast-focused, but they will have common threads that will show how Belfast connects with global history and current affairs (such as Black Lives Matters, climate change or #MeToo).

The themes are underpinned by five principles.

- i. Equality and inclusiveness
- ii. Increased accessibility and co-creation
- iii. Pressure free
- iv. Respect
- v. People centred

ABOUT THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

EQUALITY FRAMEWORK

Belfast Stories' Equality Framework was developed in 2021. It recognises that the project's vision cannot be achieved unless equality, diversity and inclusion are placed at its core and supported by co-design and an inclusive process throughout all stages of development.

It recommends that engagement be:

“an ongoing cumulative process, enabling relationships, building trust and strengthening links over time [...] Residents, voluntary and community groups, specialists and concerned or interested individuals, may want to participate at a range of levels – from providing advice to co-designing the process, undertaking some aspects of the engagement to delivering projects to meet some of the outcomes.”

It also recommends that equality screening and impact assessments should be carried out at different stages and on different elements of the project.

THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The 14-week public consultation focused on:

3. raising awareness of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development and
4. gathering ideas and evidence to help shape the design brief to make sure that the building is welcoming and accessible and everyone can see themselves reflected in its stories

An online consultation hub was created on Belfast City Council's Your Say platform. It included a survey inviting feedback on the Belfast Stories proposal and draft EQIA; copies of the consultation document in a range of formats including HTML, Easy Read, British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL); and registration for workshops and public meetings. The council's Equality Scheme consultees (appendix 1) were notified of the public consultation and draft EQIA and invited to comment. Leaflets and information were distributed across the city including pop-ups and display boards exhibited at Clifton House, Girdwood Community Hub, Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre, Crescent Arts Centre, Ulster

University, the Spectrum Centre, EastSide Visitor Centre and the James Connolly Visitor Centre. A series of meetings, workshops and events were also held (see appendix 2 for participating organisations).

THE EQUITY STEERING GROUP

An equity steering group was set up in August 2022. Its purpose is to:

- identify and connect to “missing voices” and groups of people most at risk of missing out
- co-design an engagement programme that will help ensure that everyone can have their stories heard and can access the building
- co-produce engagement opportunities throughout the public consultation and ongoing engagement, for example, by hosting or facilitating meetings or carrying out peer research
- check the accessibility of consultation materials
- act as a critical friend, helping to equity-proof and shape the design of the building and its experiences

It is made up of Belfast City Council staff working alongside people who are experts by experience of being less heard or listened to due to their identity or circumstance including:

- People from different faith, political and cultural backgrounds
- People from minoritized ethnic communities
- Deaf/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse people
- Older people
- Children and young people
- Women
- Carers and people with dependants
- LGBTQ+ people

The engagement plan recommends that the equity steering group should continue to run after August 2023, when it will co-design its new priorities, which might include, for example:

- building the confidence and trust of missing voices to share their stories and
- marketing and communications.

The engagement plan also recommends that the membership of the steering group may change as one of its roles will be to continually ask itself “Who else needs to be part of the discussion around this table?”

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

Belfast Stories engagement plan sets out plans for ongoing engagement structured around four work strands:

5. Equity. Equity recognises that not everyone starts from the same place. It gives people the different resources and opportunities they need to take part.
6. Sustainability. The purpose of this strand is to make sure that Belfast Stories is green and sustainable. It will bring together environmental, tourism, culture and economic development stakeholders.
7. Partnership. The city stakeholders network will be open to any organisation with an interest in Belfast Stories.
8. Experiences. This strand will bring together stakeholders around the stories, screen and social elements of the concept.

The strands will come together in an integrated design steering group, which will be responsible for ensuring that the design of the building and exhibition reflects the needs and wants of its many stakeholders, while it remains authentic, relevant, inclusive and accessible for the people of Belfast.

ABOUT THE EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Belfast City Council recognises Belfast Stories as a major development which will impact on staff, residents and other ratepayers. As a result, it could also impact on people and groups associated with the nine Section 75 equality categories.

An initial equality screening was carried out in December 2021. It recommended that an equality impact assessment (EQIA) be carried out on Belfast Stories, potentially at different stages in the project, such as concept and design stages.

The initial 14-week public consultation on the concept and draft EQIA took place between 10 August to 20 November 2022.

Belfast City Council plans to continue engagement with different people and organisations throughout its development. This includes two more planned public consultations: in autumn 2023 on the concept design and in late 2024/early 2025 as part of planning permission.

3. CONSIDERATION OF AVAILABLE DATA AND RESEARCH

This section provides an overview of the data and research that was considered in the draft EQIA report.

DEMOGRAPHIC MAKE-UP OF BELFAST'S RESIDENT POPULATION

A breakdown of Belfast's resident population is included in appendix 3. It is drawn from the most up-to-date data available at the time when the draft EQIA report was being prepared, namely the 2011 Census, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's mid-year population estimates and 2019 local council elections.

COUNCIL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

EQUALITY SCHEME

The council's revised Equality Scheme (approved in 2021) sets out Belfast City Council's arrangements for complying with the equality duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It includes a commitment to provide information in alternative formats on request where reasonably practicable. The scheme states that alternative formats may include Easy Read, Braille, audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY), large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.

LANGUAGE STRATEGY

Belfast City Council's 2018 Language Strategy aspires to create a place where linguistic diversity is celebrated and respected. It has two key purposes.

1. To protect and promote awareness of our indigenous languages of Irish and Ulster-Scots
2. To promote access to, inclusion of and awareness of other languages including sign languages, the languages of new communities who live in Belfast and languages and communication for disabled people

GOOD RELATIONS STRATEGY

Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, all public bodies, including Belfast City Council must have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious beliefs, political opinion or racial group.

The council's Good Relations Strategy was adopted in 2019. It states that it "aims to promote sharing over separation and the economic, social and environmental benefits of

such. We need to continue to create spaces for communities to interact and make connections with each other, moving from parallel living to meaningful relationships and casual interactions”.

It also sets down the five outcomes it seeks to achieve.

- Outcome one: Strong, positive and transformative civic leadership – inclusive governance with community changemakers
- Outcome two: Shared and connected spaces – a smart, connected city driven by inclusive and transformative place making
- Outcome three: Shared services – focusing on co-design and social innovation
- Outcome four: Structured collaboration and partnerships
- Outcome five: An intercultural city and respectful cultural expression within the rule of law

THE BELFAST AGENDA

The Belfast Agenda, Belfast’s first community plan, was published in 2017. It is currently being reviewed and revised.

At its core, the Belfast Agenda has the aim of improving the wellbeing of all Belfast citizens, and it has the potential to promote equality of opportunity and good relations, tackle and address issues of exclusion and marginalisation and have a positive impact on all Section 75 groups.

The intended outcomes of the Belfast Agenda are:

- Everyone in Belfast benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy
- Belfast is safe, fair and inclusive for all
- Belfast is a place that is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable
- Everyone experiences good health and wellbeing
- Everyone fulfils their potential

It is underpinned by values including “A focus on outcomes for people”, “Equality and good relations” and “Inclusiveness, care and compassion”. It recognises the need to “deliver services differently, in a more integrated way that is focused on the needs of people and helps them participate fully in the life of the city.”

CORPORATE PLAN

The draft Corporate Plan (2019 to 2023) supports the Belfast Agenda through its themes of:

- Growing the economy
- Living here
- Working and learning
- City development
- Resilience and sustainability
- Cross-cutting priorities, including implementing the Good Relations Strategy and developing and implementing the city’s cultural strategy, A City Imagining

It also introduces a number of organisational capabilities required to deliver excellent service and city leadership. Priorities under organisational capabilities include data development, people development, customer focus, continuous improvement and equality, diversity and inclusion.

CITY CENTRE REGENERATION AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Published in 2015, the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy recognises that Belfast:

“city centre is one of the most important places in Northern Ireland. [It is] where investment impact can be maximised, where rates are generated and where momentum can be built to support growth in the surrounding neighbourhoods.”

Inner North Belfast (including the North Street and Royal Avenue intersection) is recognised as a special action area which “should be home to Belfast’s growing learning and innovation culture” and considers opportunities for a “creative hub”.

A CITY IMAGINING

A City Imagining, Belfast City Council’s cultural strategy for 2020 to 2030, places culture and creativity at the heart of civic development.

There are four themes within the strategy.

1. A City Belonging (active participation): Priorities under this theme will support citizens to be active agents of change and co-creators of cultural activity.
2. A City Challenging (diversity): Priorities under this theme will aspire to cultivate creative environments for dynamic co-creation and synergy in our placemaking.
3. A City Creating (new approaches): Priorities under this theme will facilitate and explore new ways of working, taking more risks and helping artists to have more autonomy to engage with citizens in new and creative ways.
4. A City Exploring (our place in the world): Priorities under this theme will sustain, strengthen and develop the city’s cultural ecosystem.

It identifies a major cultural attraction that will be shaped by the stories of local people, attract visitors and connect to the city's wider cultural offering as a strategic project.

MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME

Belfast City Council's tourism strategy (2022) places authentic, local stories as key to attracting visitors to the city. It identifies Belfast Stories as a physical home for some of these stories and the flagship investment in product development in the city:

"Belfast Stories is a transformational project designed to capture the unique spirit of Belfast. This major regeneration and tourism anchor will help revitalise our city centre, allowing people to connect with the city and one another through stories, screens and social spaces."

It details how the physical building and its contents will be supported by wider programmes of storytelling and development.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Belfast City Council's Consultation and Engagement Framework describes a broad spectrum of two-way communication (from consultation to engagement to involvement) between the council and its residents and stakeholders. It recognises that effective dialogue helps make decisions, policies and services that are better suited to the people they are intended to benefit.

FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATION TO DATE

Engagement around the concept of a Belfast Stories has been ongoing since 2014 when the need for a second major visitor attraction in the city was identified while Belfast City Council was developing its then tourism strategy. It has subsequently been formally consulted on during public consultations on the council's Belfast Agenda, Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment, A City Imagining and Make Yourself at Home strategies.⁵

The concept Belfast Stories has been broadly welcomed in all consultation and engagement carried out to date.⁶ Findings relevant to the draft EQIA included:

- Cost may be a barrier, particularly to families and younger people
- Transportation can be a barrier, particularly for older people
- Need to follow inclusive design principles

⁵ Various referred to as a destination or creative hub

⁶ See appendix 4 for participating organisations

- Equality considerations should “go beyond” the statutory requirements

DRAFT STORY COLLECTION FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION

The draft Story Collection Framework was developed by Lord Cultural Resources in consultation with over 50 stakeholders including representatives from museums, libraries, archives and other collections. Consultees identified that the following voices are more likely to be missing from or underrepresented voices in current stories and collections:

- Women
- Youth (includes teenagers and student population)
- Children
- Elderly
- Religious and ethnic minorities
- Transient/migrant populations
- LGBTQ+
- Marginalized people (prisoners/ex-prisoners, children in foster care, homeless, refugees, illegal workers)
- People with special needs

OTHER RELEVANT RESEARCH

EQUALITY SCREENING

Belfast City Council’s equality screening of the Belfast Stories outline business case found that:

“There is nothing inherent in the principles underpinning the concept of the Belfast Stories to indicate an adverse impact on one or more of the Section 75 groups. Instead, the concept will follow inclusivity principles for all residents and visitors [...] will bring about advantages to Belfast citizens irrespective of their identity.”

However, it continues “The Belfast Stories aspects of this project needs to ensure equal representation of residents and visitors of different [identities]”.

As a result, it recommends that an EQIA should be carried out, potentially at key milestones such as concept, design and content stages.

ENGAGEMENT WITH CULTURE AMONG EQUALITY GROUPS

Belfast Stories will use expressions of culture to attract visitors. Stories can relate to heritage as well as about the present and the future. They can be drawn from existing archives, libraries, museums and other collections. They may be expressed through film, literature, visual arts, sound, digital technology and other creative mediums.

Appendix 5 considers how different people and groups across the different equality categories may engage with culture.

4. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

In accordance with the EQIA process, having gathered information on the policy and those affected by it in the draft EQIA, Belfast City Council then assessed:

4. whether there is likely to be a differential impact on one or more of the equality groups;
5. the extent of differential impact; and
6. whether that impact is adverse.

Differential impact suggests that a particular group has been affected differently by the policy (either favourably or unfavourably), while adverse impact is an indication that the effect is less favourable and is potentially unlawful.⁷

The following section summarises the assessment of impacts as set out in the draft EQIA report based on the evidence available at that time.

DRAFT ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

Belfast City Council recognised that Belfast Stories had the potential to impact differently on people and groups associated with the nine Section 75 equality categories. Barriers that particular groups face to activity that is similar in nature to Belfast Stories include emotional barriers (such as anxiety or discomfort); interest barriers (not relevant, don't know what's available); practical barriers (cost, transport); and societal barriers (racism, ableism).

The Belfast Stories' Equality Framework established the broad parameters to help ensure that barriers are removed and equality, diversity and inclusion remain at the heart of the project's development. This included recommending regular screening, consultation and engagement and co-design and inclusive design processes.

Belfast Stories' engagement plan and draft Story Collection Framework builds on this foundation. These identify groups who are less likely to access, experience or feel represented in Belfast Stories and sets down a range of actions to mitigate potential differential impact.

Central to this is the equity steering group, which brings together representatives from the nine equality groups to co-design further engagement and opportunities to promote equal opportunities and good relations. This group will also support the wider engagement plan and influence the design of the building and plans for the collection, curation and exhibition of its stories, making it accessible, welcoming and representative for all.

⁷ Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment, Equality Commission for NI, 2004 (pp.22-23)

Other planned mitigations include:

- a concentrated period of public consultation aimed at making the building welcoming and accessible and ensuring everyone can see themselves reflected in its stories
- consultation with the council's Equality Consultative Forum and other key organisations representing protected groups of people not engaged through any other method
- information available in written, visual and Easy Read formats and other formats on request
- a range of tailored engagement tools from online surveys and quizzes to focus groups, creative workshops and hard-hat tours
- substantial ongoing engagement including around the theme of equity
- further public consultation and equality screening
- monitoring engagement across different Section 75 groups

CONCLUSIONS

The draft EQIA report concluded that with equality, diversity and inclusion embedded in its development and extensive planned engagement including around the theme of equity, Belfast Stories has the potential to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity and good relations across all Section 75 categories.

The public consultation welcomed further evidence of any impacts on Section 75 groups, which would be collated and analysed to produce this final EQIA decision report.

5. CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE POLICIES AND MITIGATING ACTIONS

Step 4 of the Equality Commission NI's Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment requires that an EQIA considers mitigating actions where a negative impact has been identified.

The evidence currently available indicates that the project has the potential to impact positively across all Section 75 equality categories.

However, the council is mindful of the need to continue to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations. It therefore plans to continue to monitor impact throughout the development of Belfast Stories and review it at least annually including:

- at the end of this public consultation period, when a EQIA final decision report will be prepared, taking into account comments received during the consultation. The results of the EQIA will be published on the council's website and intranet and in its annual report to the Equality Commission.
- in August 2023 when a report on this stage of the engagement process (design brief to concept design) will be prepared and published on the council's website
- in autumn 2023 when a further equality screening will be carried out in advance of a public consultation on the concept design
- between August 2024 and February 2025 when a further equality screening will be carried out as part of the planning permission and public consultation process

The results of monitoring will be included in Belfast City Council's annual review on progress to the Equality Commission and in line with the council's Equality Scheme. If the monitoring and analysis over a two-year period show a greater adverse impact than predicted or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, Belfast City Council will take measures to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups.

6. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The Equality Commission states that consultation should be inclusive, afford a fair opportunity to communicate pertinent information and enable consultees to give advice and opinion on the policy so that the public authority may reach a more informed decision. The Equality Commission has also made it clear that an EQIA should not be considered as a referendum whereby the views of consultees from a majority are counted as votes to decide the outcome.⁸

The consultation process on this EQIA covered a 14-week period from 10 August to 20 November 2022. During the consultation period, the draft EQIA report was available on Belfast City Council's Your Say consultation website. It was accompanied by a survey inviting feedback on the Belfast Stories proposal and draft EQIA. The council's Equality Scheme consultees were notified of the draft EQIA and invited to comment. Leaflets and information were distributed across the city and a series of meetings, workshops and events were held.⁹

Responses were received as follows.

SURVEY RESPONSES IN RELATION TO THE DRAFT EQIA

One hundred and twenty-seven people responded to the survey on Belfast City Council's Your Say Belfast consultation website.¹⁰ Of those, 50 people (39.4 per cent) answered questions specifically on the draft EQIA.

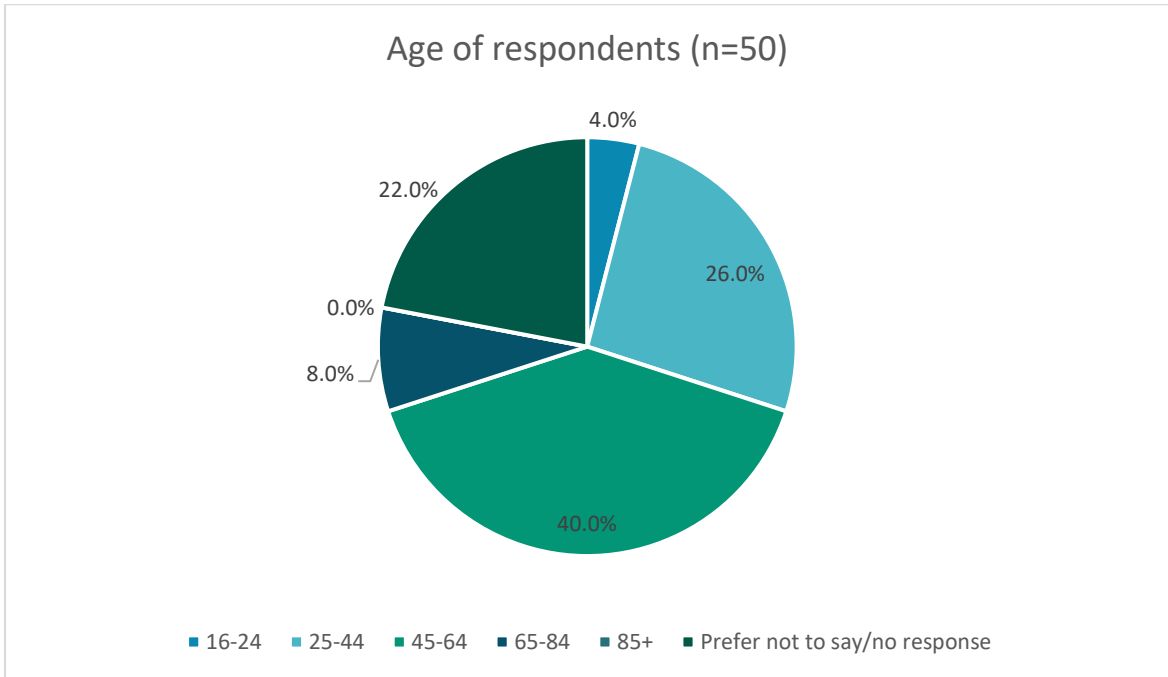
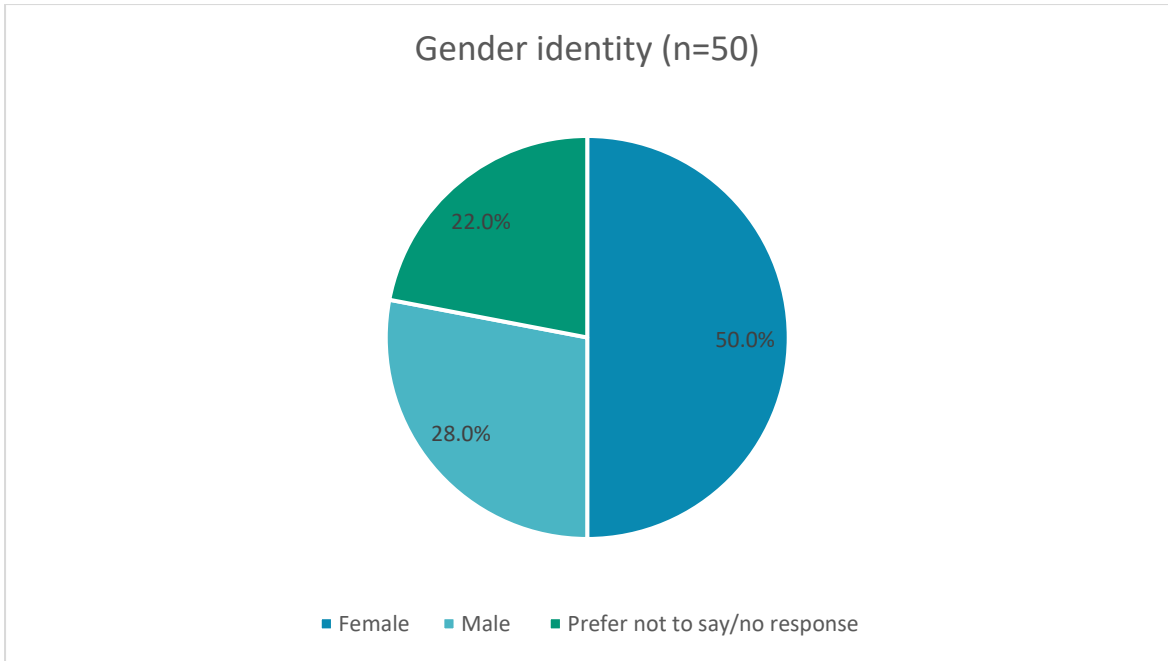
DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF RESPONDENTS

The majority of respondents were female (50.0 per cent) and aged between 16 and 64 (66.0 per cent).

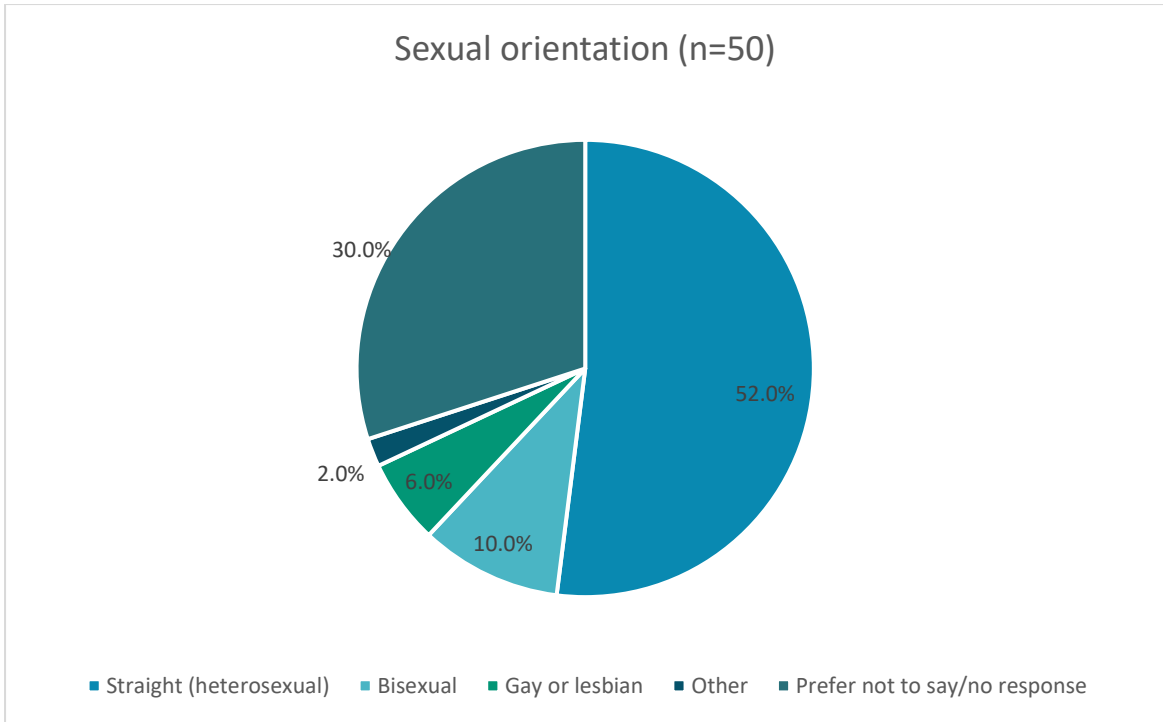
⁸ Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment, Equality Commission for NI, 2004 (p.36)

⁹ See appendix 2

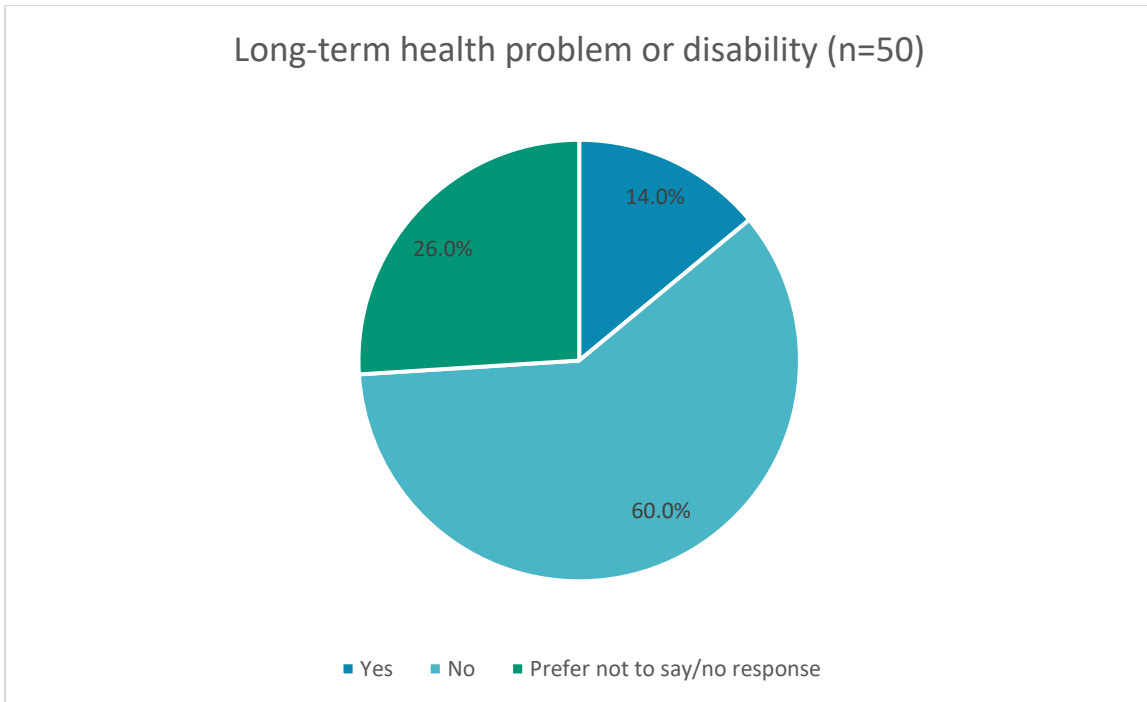
¹⁰ See appendix 6 for a list of organisations that responded via the survey



52.0 per cent of respondents identified as straight, and 18.0 per cent identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other.

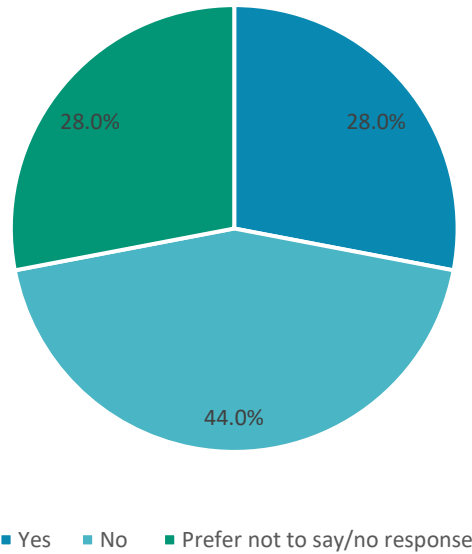


14 per cent identified as being disabled or having a long-term health problem that limits their day-to-day activity.



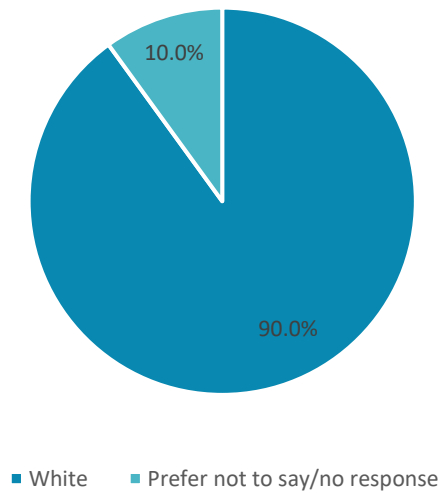
28.0 per cent had dependents or caring responsibilities for family members or other persons.

Dependents or caring responsibilities (n=50)

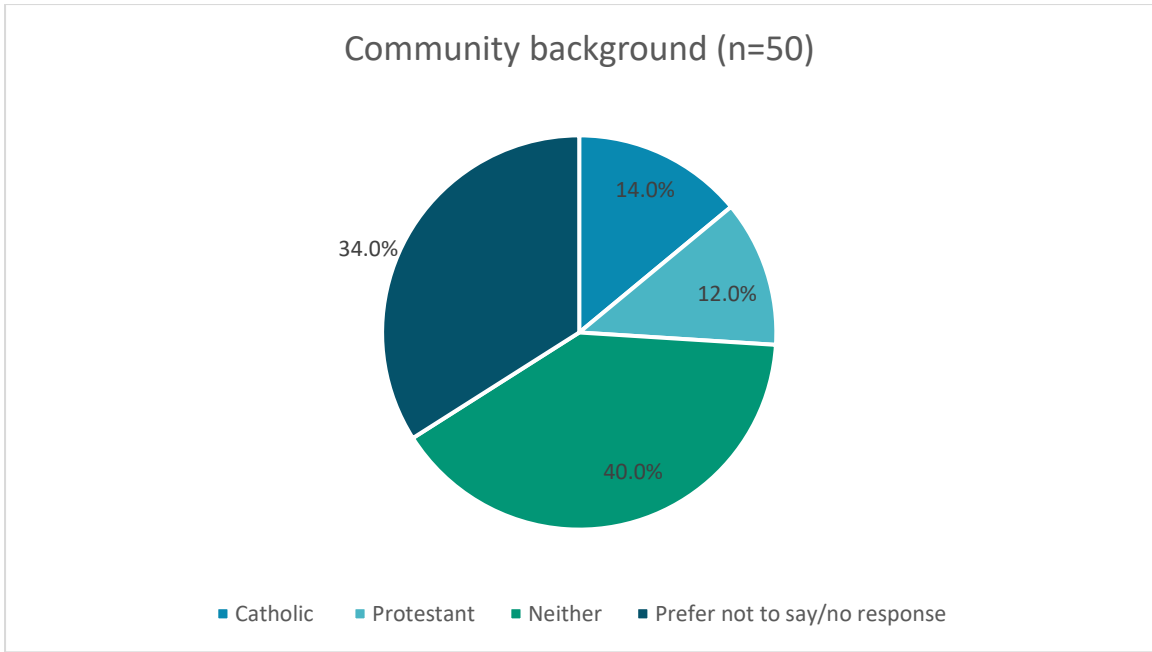


90 per cent identified as being from a white community background.

Ethnic origin (n=50)

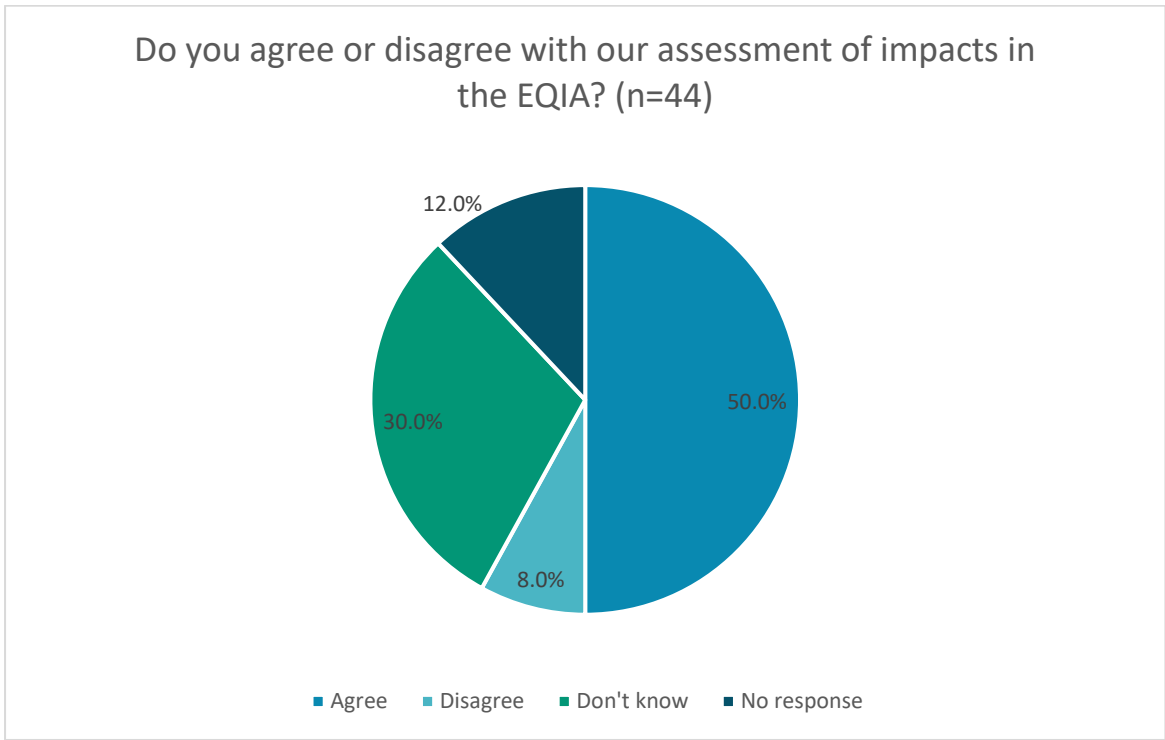


14.0 per cent identified as being from a Catholic community background; 12.0 per cent from a Protestant community background; and 40.0 per cent from neither a Catholic nor Protestant community background.



AGREEMENT WITH THE ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

The majority of respondents agreed with the assessment of impacts. 8 per cent disagreed.



Reasons given by those who disagreed with the assessment of impacts were:

- “not all sides get listened to.”
- “Let’s break down the various communities and see what might appeal to the public at large. Taxpayers that vote in the council and pay for it. The project must cater to those that have shaped Belfast”

- “I have not read into the policy and data to make my own mind up on this question. Further open access research needs to be available and open to public.”

ADDITIONAL IMPACTS

There were 17 responses to the question “Are you aware of any other impacts that we haven't identified?” including 11 responses (64.7 per cent) stating that they could not identify additional impacts.

One response reinforced the opportunity to improve good relations. Other responses were less relevant to good relations or equality of opportunity across Section 75 protected characteristics.¹¹

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE

There were 14 responses to the question “Are you aware of any other evidence or research that may be relevant to Belfast Stories impact assessment?”. Of these, 11 (78.6 per cent) were unaware of additional evidence. Other responses were:

- “Do not have the time to study in depth.”
- “Research can be biased based on who carried it out, what was the remit and the reason for it.”
- “Boston College revelations of interviewees' data.”

OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY AND GOOD RELATIONS

There were 25 responses to the question “What else could we do to promote equality of opportunity and good relations?”. Accordingly:

- 7 responses emphasised the importance of consultation and engagement, and 4 listed additional groups they felt should be engaged. There were homeless people, care homes, “advocacy agencies” and primary schools.
- 2 respondents emphasised the need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation, although another respondent felt that there should be “Less tick boxing. It needs to develop on an individual basis – rather than representatively.”
- 2 responses felt that Belfast Stories should be wider than Belfast
- Suggestions to promote good relations included ensuring there is political balance; using arts and festivals to promote good relations; and challenging the received narratives (“Ensure there is a focus n unifying stories – Belfast hasn't always been a divided city – lets hear about that! What was it like post troubles? When we all lived as one and no one cared about your religious background. I appreciate we need to speak of the troubles but this should by no means be the overall story of this place.

¹¹ These responses were: “Parking, business as in coffee shops (If your opening a cafe)”; “Confused why rural needs impact assessment if it is Belfast Stories?”; “Emotional trauma. Anger. Personal regret”; “Impact of climate crisis”.

We are much more than that.”; “make sure not to work in a way that allows gatekeepers”).

WIDER ENGAGEMENT

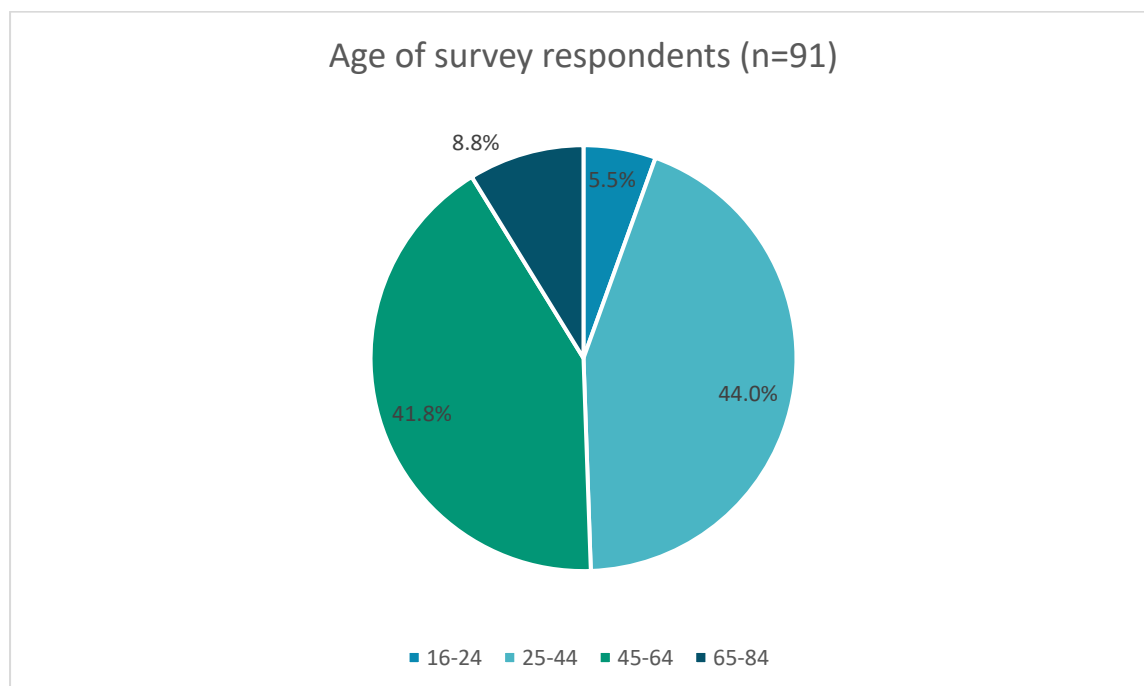
RESPONSES TO THE OVERALL SURVEY

One hundred and 27 responses were received across the whole survey which, in addition to the questions specific to the draft EQIA, asked:

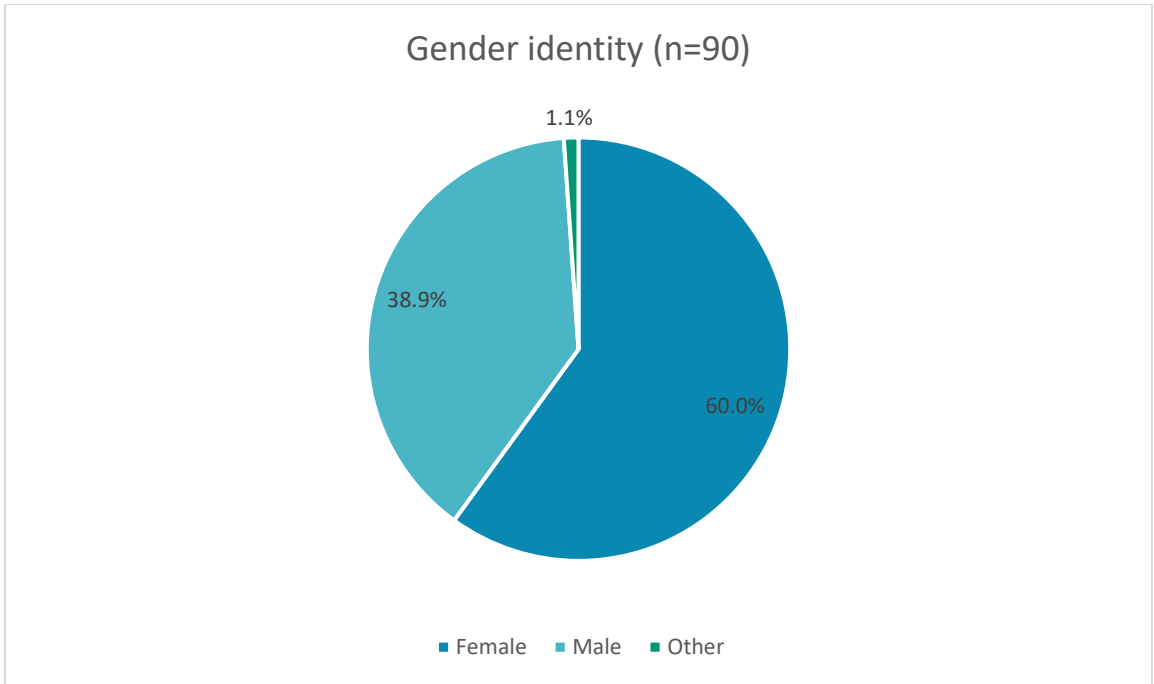
- What might stop you from enjoying Belfast Stories?
- Have we identified the right people for the equity steering group?
- Are there any other groups of people at risk of missing out?
- How else can we engage with people at risk of missing out?
- Is the story collection framework a good foundation for gathering stories?
- What might stop you telling your story?
- What support might people in your community or organisation need to share their stories?

DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF RESPONSES ACROSS THE OVERALL SURVEY

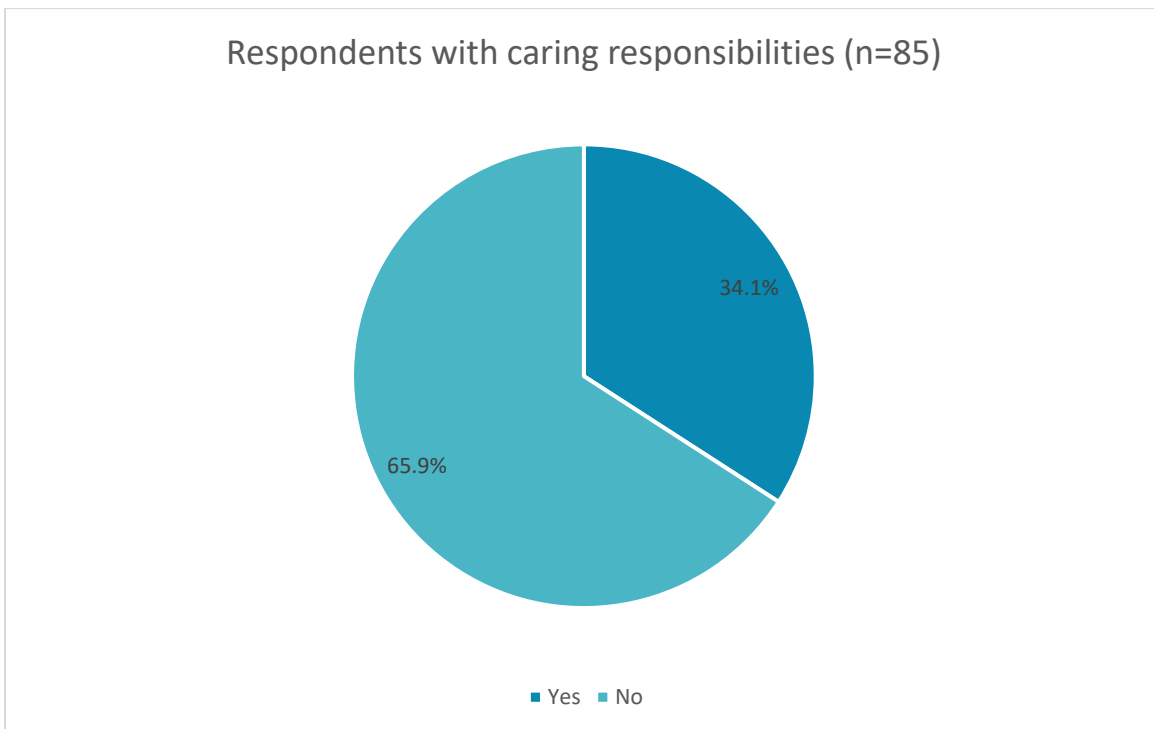
85.8 per cent of respondents were aged 25 to 64.



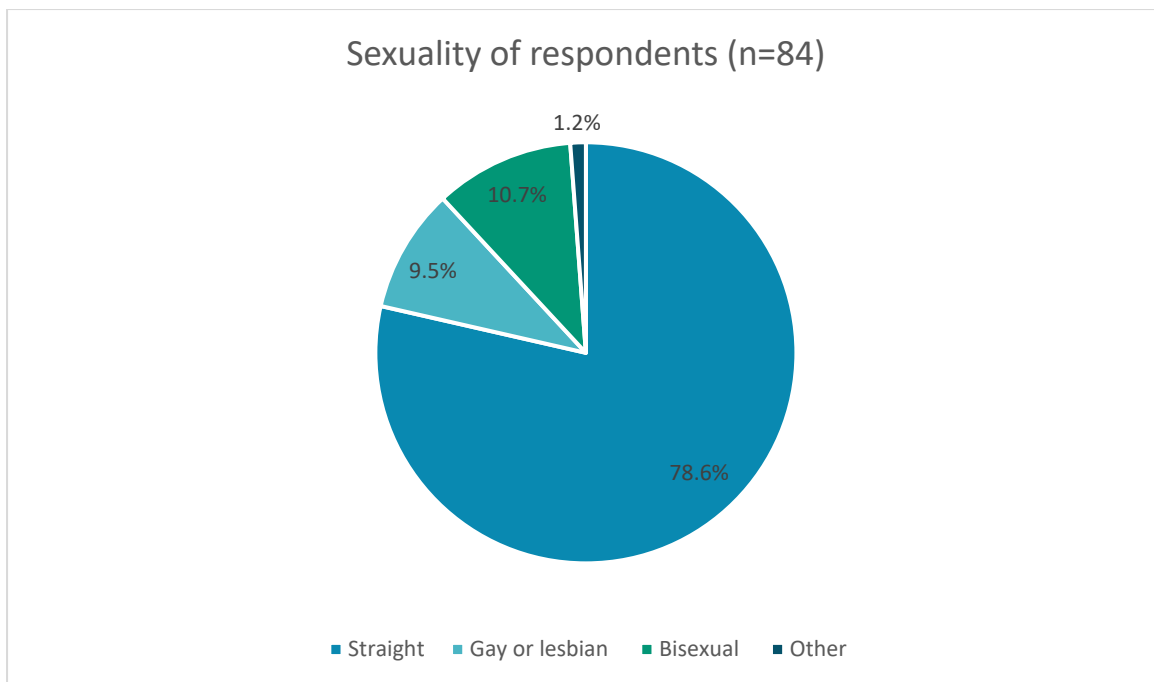
60.0 per cent of respondents were female and 38.9 per cent male.



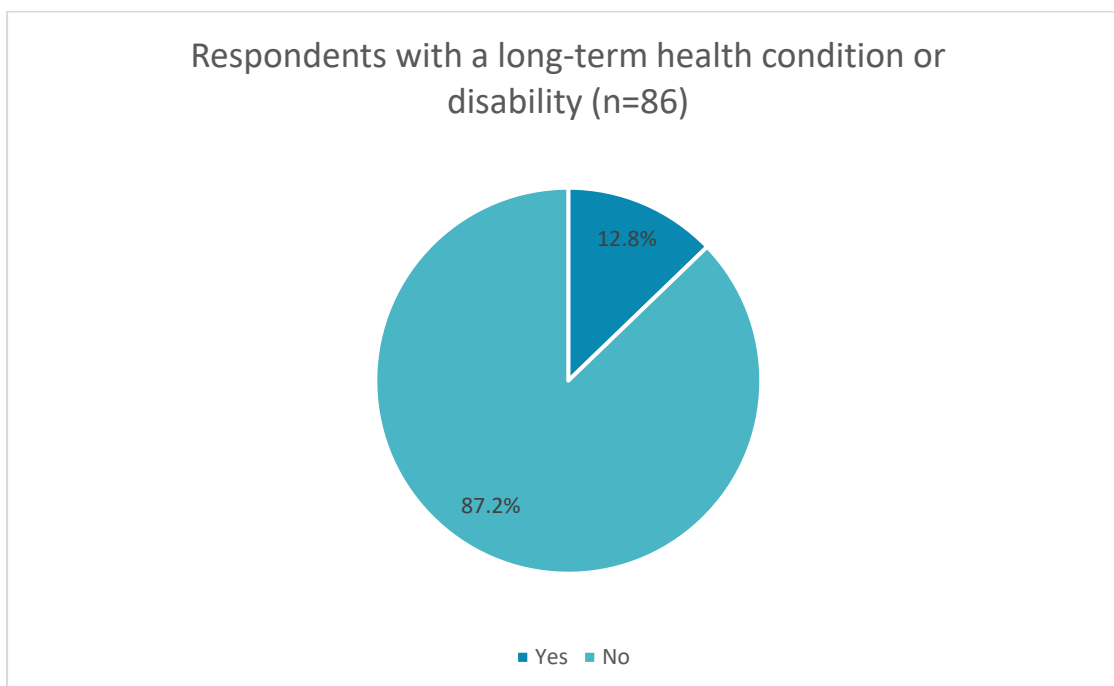
34.1 per cent of respondents have caring responsibilities including 20 per cent with responsibility for caring for an older person or disabled person.



78.6 per cent of respondents identified as straight (heterosexual) and 21.4 per cent identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other (“queer”).

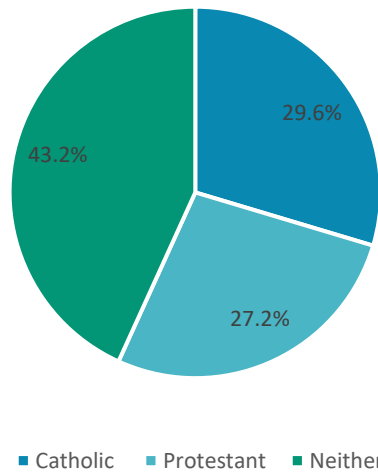


12.8 per cent of respondents indicated that they had a long-term health condition or disability that limits their day-to-day activity.



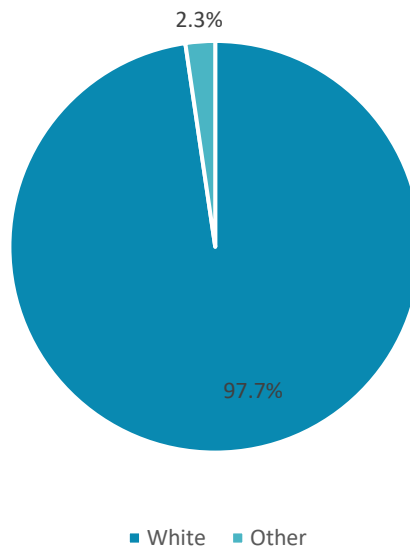
29.6 per cent of survey respondents identified as belonging to the Catholic community; 27.2 per cent identified as from the Protestant community; and 43.2 per cent identified as belonging to neither community.

Community survey respondents belong to (n=81)



97.7 per cent of respondents identified as white, and 2.3 per cent identified as other including from a mixed ethnic background.

Respondents' ethnic origin (n=86)



EQUITY STEERING GROUP

In August 2022, an equity steering group was set up comprising 10 experts by experience including people from Black, Asian, Middle Eastern, inner city, working class and LGBTQ+ backgrounds; older and younger people; disabled and neurodiverse people; and people with caring responsibilities.

There were 4 equity steering group meetings during the public consultation, which were attended by an average of 8 people (31 in total).

OTHER ENGAGEMENT AROUND EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

A further 16 workshops were facilitated with people and groups who are generally less heard or more at risk of missing out. These were attended by 136 people (9 on average).

Ten one-to-one meetings were also held with organisations representing or advocating for people and groups at risk of missing out.

ENGAGEMENT WITH SECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS

There were 31 workshops with the film, tourism, arts, heritage, the voluntary and community, Irish language and public sectors, engaging 238 representatives.

Written submissions were also received from seven organisations (see appendix 7).

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Belfast City Council facilitated four public meetings. These took place in the north, south, east and west of the city and were attended by 15 participants.

Information boards were displayed at Clifton House, Girdwood Community Hub, Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre, Crescent Arts Centre, Ulster University, Spectrum Centre, EastSide Visitor Centre and the James Connolly Visitor Centre.

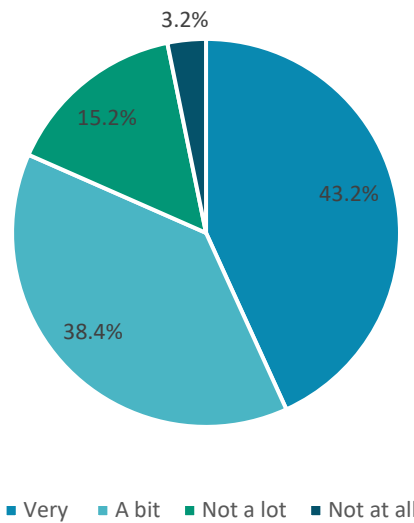
In August 2022, Belfast City Council appointed thrive, the audience development agency for NI, and Daisy Chain Inc, a creative consultancy, to help raise awareness and build excitement including through on-street interviews, events and workshops and pop-up consultation hubs in central and surrounding locations. They engaged a total of 683 participants.

RELEVANT FINDINGS FROM WIDER ENGAGEMENT

BUILDING THE EXCITEMENT

Across all engagement strands, there was remarkable excitement about the concept of Belfast Stories. For example, in survey responses, 81.6 per cent of survey respondents said they were excited about Belfast Stories, with 43.2 per cent saying they felt “very” excited.

Are you excited about Belfast Stories? (n=125)



Reasons people felt excited included:

- looking forward to the regeneration of the area, which many felt was run down, unwelcoming or even unsafe (“the area is a mess a disgrace so it will be a shot in the arm for the area”)
- recognition of an opportunity to change the usual negative, narrow or “us and them” narrative of Belfast. (“Think it's a great opportunity to tell stories of the city and its people that transcend tired and unrepresentative binary views.”)
- a potential boost to pride at both civic and individual level.

“So important to capture the stories of our city by the people who make it, particularly those of senior citizens whose views are often seen as irrelevant.”

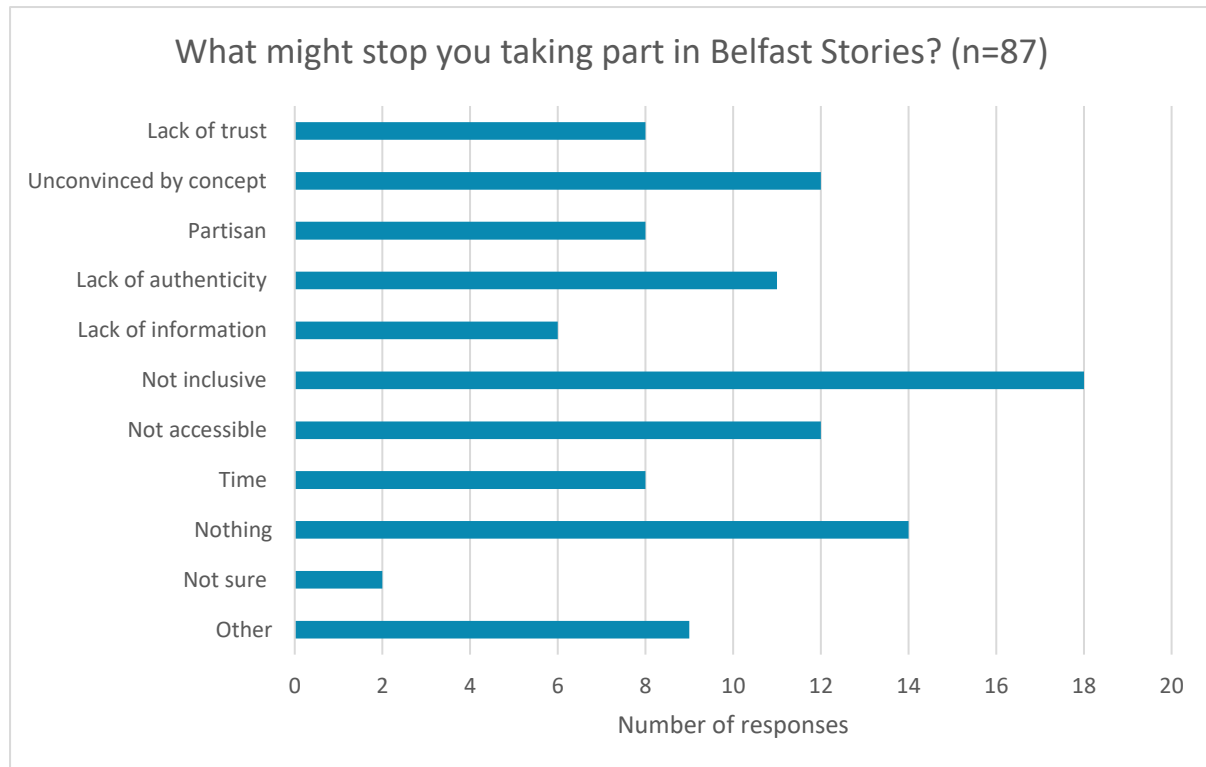
“The idea excites us, the Roma have never been included in anything like this”

Among participants who were unsure about the concept, concerns included

- Not knowing enough about it. Some struggled with being consulted on a concept, rather than on set plans or physical designs.
- Timescales. As the building is not due to open until 2028, some felt that it was too far in the future to be of interest.
- There was suspicion about the political narrative, specifically that the centre would “just” tell the usual “us and them” narrative or, for some people, concerns that it would just tell the story of “them”.
- There were also concerns about authenticity, which qualified a lot of opinions, including those who were otherwise excited for Belfast Stories. For example, “I am excited if it is not watered down” or “Disnefied” or is if it is “true to me”.

Among those who were not excited or disagreed strongly with the concept, the main concern was that the investment would be better spent elsewhere or is diverting funding from other priorities, such as preserving other heritage buildings or investment in existing arts and cultural infrastructure.

BARRIERS THAT WOULD STOP PEOPLE ENJOYING BELFAST STORIES



The survey asked “What might stop you taking part in Belfast Stories?”. Eighty-seven responses were received. Most related to the participating in the story collection process, rather than visiting the physical building.

Eighteen responses related to a perceived or potential lack of inclusivity. This included people who felt that their culture would not be welcome (“one sided narratives”, “if it is classist or erases minorities”, “because I know my faith and culture is not wanted”) and people living outside Belfast (26 per cent of respondents (24 people) were from outside Belfast), who were unsure whether they were included in Belfast Stories.

However, among the 12 responses that were unconvinced by the concept of Belfast Stories, there were concerns that there is too much emphasis on equality or particular equality groups:

- “Woke-ism gone mad.”
- “If I felt like the focus was so far onto marginalised groups that ordinary, educated, white middle-class people aren't encouraged to also apply and feel like we have a chance too.”

Eight responses also indicated concern that the content would be politically partisan.

Twelve responses related to access including the location of the building (getting there and perceptions of safety), cost and lack of adjustments.

THE BUILDING

Across all engagement strands, barriers identified that would stop people accessing the building included:

- Cost. It was felt that at least some of Belfast Stories (such as social spaces, retail, restaurants and bars) should be free to enter and that different pricing models for locals and tourists should be explored.
- “Not for the likes of us”. Some consultees felt that the building might not be welcoming, at least to “the likes of” them. Consultees reinforced the importance of staff training and skills to create a warm welcome.
- Lack of activity for children. Consultees wanted family friendly activity and a play area.
- Young people not welcome. It was felt that there is a lack of space in Belfast where young people can just “hang out” safely, particularly away from alcohol.
- Whole family appeal. Consultees indicated a lack of activities in Belfast that would appeal to different generations, from toddlers to grandparents.
- Safety and fear of anti-social behaviour. This was a greater issue for older people and disabled people, particularly when combined with lack of transport which increases the risk of people being left alone and at night. People from minoritized ethnic communities and the LGBTQ+ community also described being subject to racist and homophobic abuse (for example, “The current approach along Royal Avenue involves being shouted at by preachers declaiming the LGBTQIA+.”).
- Transport. This was a major concern, particularly among older people, disabled people, minoritized ethnic communities, carers and people living in working class areas. Concerns included lack of parking spaces and accessible parking and cost of parking. There was also felt to be poor public transport links and a scarcity of taxis, both of which are worse at night, further hindering the evening economy. Consultees would welcome a free shuttle bus down Royal Avenue and better transport links, particularly at night and to rural areas.
- Building design. This was of particular concern to older people, neurodiverse people and disabled people. It was also recognised that inclusive design would benefit the rest of the population, in particular children and parents. The new wing of the Ulster Hospital was cited as an example of good, inclusive design. Other ideas included:
 - Architects, designers, restaurant tenants, Belfast Stories staff and so on all to benefit from dementia-friendly training

- Carers, people with dementia and older people to work with the building design team
- Colour-coded floors
- Laminate floor should run length of grain (otherwise creates perception barriers)
- Clear signage
- Way out signs *inside* toilets
- Quiet areas throughout the building (not just one for whole attraction or exhibition, but in the lobby, restaurants and social spaces as well)
- Red and blue plates for people with dementia so they can see pale food
- Assisted or lightweight doors
- No or dropped kerbs and level access from parking areas and in to the building
- Access for mobility scooters
- Plenty of toilets including changing places
- Accessible toilets (not “disabled” toilets)
- Gender neutral facilities and spaces
- Plenty of seating
- Wide lifts
- Firefighting or evacuation lifts
- Good lighting
- Good acoustics
- Soft surfaces to absorb sound
- Vertigo warnings on the roof garden and viewing platform
- Unilingual signage. This was felt to be a particular barrier for the Irish language community.

For carers and disabled people, a good practice buddy ticketing system was essential. It was also felt that older people may need more encouragement to go out after the pandemic and that the centre should facilitate group visits.

THE EXHIBITION

Barriers identified across all engagement strands that might stop people enjoying the exhibition included:

- Cost. This was the main issue raised in relation to the exhibition for local people.
- Lack of interest or relevance. This barrier was identified most frequently in the survey. As ensuring relevance was the part of the main purpose for many workshops, this barrier came up less frequently in person. Suggestions to help mitigate these barriers included engagement with minoritized groups and combining visual and audio archive footage with first-person stories for older people and people with dementia.
- Different language and literacy abilities (such as children and newcomer, Roma and d/Deaf communities). Generally, people preferred the exhibition to be “not too wordy”, favouring “more powerful” visuals. A mix of media was also felt to better

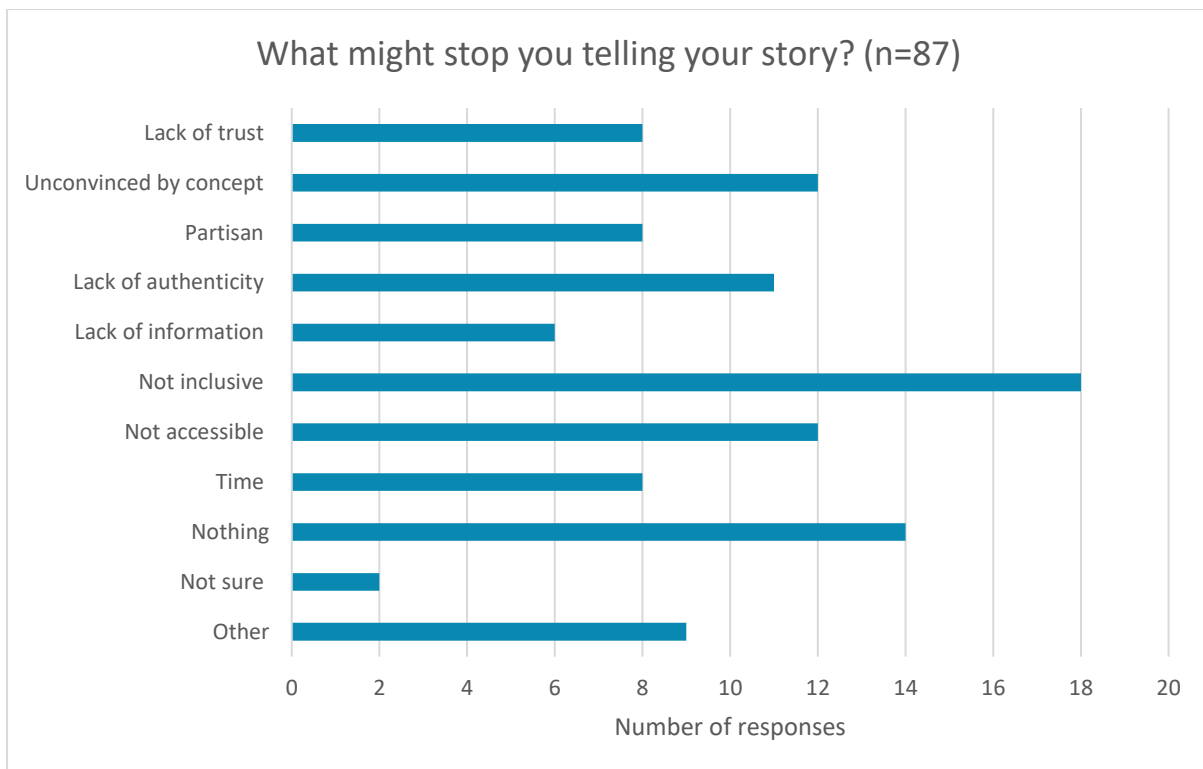
“help get someone’s identity”. Suggestions included changing colours, lighting or music to reflect the stories or how people are supposed to feel in response.

- Triggering content, including “Dark stories” that could traumatise or retraumatise, flashing images and loud noises
- Lack of outreach. This would extend the engagement approach after the building has opened to ensure people and groups more at risk of missing out have the opportunity to take part.
- Marketing that is not inclusive of diverse communities (“Not just white princesses from Frozen”)

Suggestions to help mitigate these barriers included:

- Simultaneous translation
- Phone or digital apps to engage with the exhibition in own language
- Interactive activities, games and augmented reality
- Programmable community performance space
- Programmable community exhibition space
- Community spaces (for example, for a monthly d/Deaf community meet-up)
- A changing programme marking civic or cultural events (such as Christmas and Chinese New Year)
- Parental guidance-type warnings
- Quiet spaces
- Use of images showing diverse communities (including but not limited to LGBTQ+ people and people from minoritized ethnic communities)
- English and Irish signage, exhibition text, marketing and other materials

BARRIERS THAT WOULD STOP PEOPLE TELLING THEIR STORIES



The survey asked “What might stop you telling your story?”. Responses broadly mirrored the responses to the “What would stop you taking part in Belfast Stories?” question. In practice, during workshops and other in-person engagement, the vast majority of people were very willing to tell their stories.

Some people indicated that they would be more comfortable telling their story to another person. This would be more conversational, prompting them to open up or dive deeper. It would also help overcome barriers around literacy and language abilities, from dyslexia, other first languages or simply embarrassment at poor spelling.

Others would prefer to write or record their story direct, whether finding this approach more creative or less exposing.

During in-person consultation, only a very few felt that they had no story to tell (“Who would be interested in my story?”; “Other people have told stories better”). Generally, young women appeared more reticent than young men, and women more reticent than men in general. Young people were also very concerned with their public profile and would only tell their story (in 2028) “if they were successful”.

Group dynamics helped people overcome initial reticence. For example, at the carers workshop, those who felt their stories were not interesting enough were chivvied along by peers who championed carers as “unsung heroes” who are “not recognised enough”. They were quickly boosted, and stories were shared.

In other group settings where it might be perceived that there could be a lack of trust, for example, with minoritized ethnic groups, they were again happy to open up within their peer group. It may be less likely that they would have told their stories individually.

Still, others may prefer the privacy of individual story collection, particularly those who have sensitive or traumatic stories to tell. There was concern about the potential for storytelling to retraumatise. Organisations such as the Victims and Survivors Service have excellent, tried-and-tested policies and practices co-designed with the intended beneficiaries.

Another barrier that emerged through in-person engagement is storytelling fatigue. This may particularly affect people whose stories are of academic interest; victims, survivors, older LGBTQ+ people (particularly men), ex-combatants and -prisoners, for example, may already have told their stories, sometimes more than once, to researchers.

Many people's stories have also already been collected through community groups, reminiscence projects, local history associations and so on. In general, participants indicated they would prefer that this activity is shared or showcased, rather than stories recorded anew.

This also points again to the need for a foundation of trust. While the majority of participants in the consultation had little reticence sharing their stories with the facilitators, who were generally unknown to the participants, many of the workshops were organised or supported by trusted intermediaries, whether a local community group or respected individual "of" that community, which helped reassure participants.

One person felt that people collecting the stories should be local people. Another felt that collectors should be "of" the community stories are being collected from (so, for example, someone with Irish language should collect stories from the Irish language community). Another felt that the stories should be interpreted by Belfast people. Overall, "It shouldn't be two white men".

The use of trusted intermediaries is likely to be particularly important for vulnerable or marginalized groups. Consultees suggested that where stories had not already been collected, tools that could be used included training and resourcing (for example, with interview scripts, facilitators, digital recording devices and so on) community groups to collect stories, training peer facilitators and using arts to help people open up and approach stories more obliquely.

Some would be happy to have their words used, but not their voice (because they dislike the sound of their voice on recordings); others would be happy to have their voice used, but not their face. Several consultees, particularly among minoritized ethnic groups and young people, wondered whether they could use an avatar instead.

There was concern that the collection process could be difficult or cumbersome, particularly for those with different literacy or memory loss.

Other suggested tools and techniques that might help different people and groups share their story include:

- “story stations” or booths distributed throughout the city
- storytelling hubs in libraries
- storytelling booths in Belfast Stories (including onsite during the build)
- provision of example stories
- reminiscence workshops (“Best asset is the film archive – use this to generate stories; let people remember, then tell stories.”)
- walking/talking tours and consultations
- poetry and creative writing workshops
- other arts and crafts including drama, photography, music and quilt making
- “living libraries”¹²
- community ambassadors
- use of technology to mitigate barriers such as physical access for disabled people and people living in poverty (for example, an online forum to record or submit a story)
- provision of transport to Belfast Stories or for story collectors to go to storytellers
- provision of resources to communities, such as recording devices, guidance and facilitators
- community outreach, for example, through story collection days or hubs in community or public spaces
- an ethics advisor
- assurance as to how stories will be used, safely and with respect
- trauma-informed practice and processes
- trained, skilled and properly resourced story collectors and facilitators. Consultees stressed the need for excellent people skills to put people at ease and listening skills to tease out and collect stories accurately
- clear messaging assuring people their stories are valuable and welcome
- clear messaging welcoming the stories of minority communities
- provision of collateral in a range of languages and formats including Braille, large print, audio-visual, BSL, ISL and Irish

PEOPLE AT PARTICULAR RISK OF MISSING OUT

The role of the community and voluntary sector as trusted intermediaries to engage people, was emphasised throughout the consultation. This included the sector in its widest sense including community centres, residents associations, sports clubs, historical societies, interest groups and arts organisations. Consultees also emphasised a need to go to where

¹² See, for example, www.community-relations.org.uk/news-centre/living-library-where-people-are-books

people and communities are, rather than expect them to come to a consultation or event, and several organisations volunteered their service.

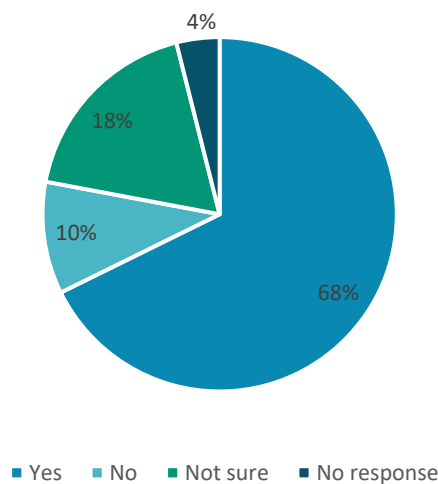
Other suggestions included:

- press
- social media
- print, radio and TV advertisement
- leaflets
- information available in a range of formats including visuals and video
- events targeted at particular minority groups
- engagement with the Education Authority and schools
- engagement with large employers and their employees
- engagement via libraries
- arts and storytelling events
- pop-up “audience by surprise” events
- sensory and relaxed events
- events in other community settings (such as job centres, hairdressers, bowling greens, play parks, supermarkets, pubs and bookies)
- drop-in hubs
- Zoom consultation sessions
- community ambassadors
- celebrity ambassadors
- word of mouth

THE EQUITY STEERING GROUP

Over two thirds of survey respondents (68 per cent) agreed that we had identified the right people to be part of the equity steering group.

Have we identified the right people to be part of the equity steering group? (n=127)



Other suggestions for the equity steering group included:

- Migrant communities
- People with refugee status or seeking asylum
- Men
- Middle-aged men
- The very elderly
- Students
- People of no faith
- Integrated education alumni
- Irish speakers
- Those who no longer live in Belfast or NI
- Parents
- Foster carers and guardians
- Younger children
- People with care experience
- Underprivileged children
- Long-term unemployed
- Different socio-economic classes, in particular people living in poverty
- “Normal working every day people”
- “Less educated people who struggle to read large blocks of text”
- Blind people
- People with dementia
- People from geographic communities
- People living at interfaces
- Homeless people
- Drug addicts
- Tourists
- People who are not affiliated to groups

One person suggested that the equity steering group “Be flexible in its make up [and] rotates and members can join and leave without it becoming a burden or precious to just a chosen few.”

Some respondents considered more “professional” expertise would be advantageous (“Experts! How are individual people within this massive group of ‘diverse identities’ going to interact with each other? You can’t just pooled such diverse people together and expect to get good quality data”). Others were concerned that the equality focus was misguided or that the steering group was just “box ticking” or “woke” (for example, “If everyone has an equal voice then the result is not proportionate.”).

RESPONSES IN RELATION TO THE IRISH LANGUAGE

Belfast City Council hosted an Irish language consultation session, which was attended by 19 representatives. There were also three written submissions on behalf of the Irish language sector.¹³

Consultees “warmly welcome[d]” Belfast Stories and were “hugely encouraged by the commitment to include diverse stories representing the different identities and people that make up our wonderful city”. However, there were concerns that “the Irish language community have been, so far, completely omitted from the Belfast Stories concept”. Rather,

“it is incumbent upon Belfast City Council to ensure that these rights are catered for in council projects through language visibility. To overlook the language rights of this growing and vibrant community, who have long campaigned for equality and respect, to access such an innovative and important resource through their native tongue would be doing a huge disservice to them, in breach of international and domestic treaty rights and would be contradicting the council’s own Language Strategy”

As well as welcoming the Irish language community, such an approach could also help good relations by “normalising the language [as] research has consistently shown increased visibility leads to increased tolerance and understanding”.

While there was recognition of Irish as a native minority language that should not be categorised with other minority groups, it was also suggested that there should be “members of the Irish language community on the project’s equity steering group, given that all other minority groups across the city are represented.”

“The impact of being unable to access such a magnificent resource in one’s own language is something which should certainly be taken into consideration when

¹³ Conradh na Gaeilge, Forbairt Feirste and Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich

evaluating those who may be at risk of missing out. This would ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are truly at the heart of the Belfast Stories project.”

Other suggestions from the Irish language sector included:

4. the Irish language is woven throughout the Belfast Stories themes, including celebration, diversity, education and the story of the language itself.
5. there should be bilingual resources throughout Belfast Stories including external and internal signage, exhibitions, marketing and other materials.
6. the council develop and implement a language screening assessment for all new council policies, practices and projects.

RESPONSES IN RELATION TO ULSTER SCOTS

A meeting was held with the Ulster Scots Agency, and the Ulster Scots Community Network also participated in a consultation workshop.

The opportunity to foster further understanding the cultural identity of Ulster Scots was broadly welcomed. It was felt that this should include stories of the language, of “celebrated” and “lesser known” individuals, of industrial heritage and diaspora and international connections.

In general throughout the public consultation, there was concern that there could be an imbalance or bias in content and presentation. One consultee also welcomed further reflection of other Ulster identities and ancestries (for example, Anglo-Ulster, Franco and Italianate).

7. CONCLUSIONS

Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires that, in making any decision with respect to a policy, a public authority shall take into account any EQIA and consultation carried out in relation to the policy (para. 9.2). There is no strict definition of what “taking into account” entails. However, the Equality Commission guidance on how decisions should be recorded makes it clear that a public authority must be able to record the decision-making process (as well as the decision) and that the decision must be justified.¹⁴

The guidance also advises that all available information should be combined in making the decision. This includes the information gathered during the research phase and the results of the consultation.¹⁵

This information has been brought together in this report in order to ensure that Belfast City Council is in a position to take account of all issues when making a decision in relation to Belfast Stories.

The following analysis of the key points arising from the EQIA and the consultation responses is provided to assist the council, but it is not exhaustive and is not meant to be a substitute for the detailed information presented in this report.

SUPPORT FOR THE BELFAST STORIES CONCEPT

The Belfast Stories’ Equality Framework established the broad parameters to help ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion remain at the heart of the project’s development.

Belfast Stories’ engagement plan identified groups who are less likely to access, experience or feel represented in Belfast Stories and set down a range of actions to mitigate potential differential impacts during the public consultation and ongoing engagement.

During the public consultation, the engagement plan ensured that Belfast City Council gathered feedback across a broad range of equality groups, and there were exceptionally high levels of support (for example, in survey responses, 81.6 per cent of survey respondents said they were excited about Belfast Stories), including across all Section 75 equality categories. Many consultees also reflected on the potential positive impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

Nevertheless, there were concerns that Belfast Stories could present a partisan, binary or narrow perspective of Belfast that would exclude the stories or identities of particular groups. The council should continue to embed equality, diversity and inclusion in the

¹⁴ Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment, ECNI 2004, p.45

¹⁵ *ibid.*

development of Belfast Stories, ensuring that early potential for positive impact can be realised throughout the project design, delivery and implementation.

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

The next stage of engagement is an opportunity to continue to build on excitement and good will to start to shape a building and an experience that all people and groups can access and feel included in.

During the public consultation, consultees offered further insight in relation to groups of people at risk of missing out and tactics to mitigate potential differential impact.

Tactics to engage people at risk of missing out are considered and included in the engagement plan. These include:

- continuation of the equity steering group
- review and refresh membership of the equity steering group
- identify and connect to “missing voices” and groups of people most at risk of missing out
- co-design an engagement programme that will help ensure that everyone can have their stories heard and can access the building
- co-produce engagement opportunities, for example, by hosting or facilitating meetings or carrying out peer research
- check the accessibility of consultation materials
- equity-proof and shape the design of the building and its experiences
- storytelling ambassadors
- support for community networks to test the story collection process, identifying barriers that might stop people from telling their story and coming up with ideas to overcome them
- pop-up engagement workshops during festivals and events
- an onsite drop-in consultation hub

Ongoing engagement should continue to focus on those most at risk of missing out, and the engagement plan and stakeholder mapping should be reviewed and revised in light of lessons learned and additional evidence uncovered during the public consultation.

STORY COLLECTION

Belfast City Council plans to start story collection in spring 2023. The engagement plan includes recommendations for engaging around story collection. This should focus on action learning by testing processes and tools with groups that are less likely to share stories (because of their culture, identity or circumstance), in particular older people and the very elderly (no one aged over 85 responded to the survey), whose stories are otherwise at risk of being lost.

The Belfast Stories concept was broadly welcomed by the Irish language community as an opportunity to explore and celebrate the history of the language and the city's Irish language community. This may in turn enhance good relations by affording respect and recognition to a native minority language in keeping with local and international policy and best practice.

Belfast City Council should continue to consult closely with Irish language and Ulster Scots stakeholders, including in relation to the development of the building, story collection, exhibition and overall experience. Resulting language policy or practice should be subject to an equality screening and (if required) a full equality impact assessment.

8. MONITORING FOR ADVERSE IMPACT

Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires that a system be established to monitor the impact of the final policy in order to find out its effect on the relevant groups and subgroups within the equality categories.

The results of ongoing monitoring must be reviewed and published on an annual basis. If the monitoring and analysis of results over a two-year period show that the policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, the public authority must ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups.

Belfast City Council plans to continue to monitor impact throughout the development of Belfast Stories and review it at least annually including:

- at the end of this public consultation period, when the draft EQIA report will be revised, taking into account comments received during the consultation, and a final EQIA report will be prepared for Belfast City Council. The results of the EQIA will be published on the council's website and intranet and in its annual report to the Equality Commission.
- in August 2023 when a report on this stage of the engagement process (design brief to concept design) will be prepared and published on the council's website
- in autumn 2023 when a further equality screening will be carried out in advance of a public consultation on the concept design
- between August 2024 and February 2025 when a further equality screening will be carried out as part of the planning permission and public consultation process

The results of monitoring will be included in Belfast City Council's annual review on progress to the Equality Commission and in line with the council's Equality Scheme. If the monitoring and analysis over a two-year period show a greater adverse impact than predicted or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, Belfast City Council will take measures to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups.

APPENDIX 1: EQUALITY SCHEME CONSULTEES

Action Ability Belfast	Bryson An Munia Tober
Action Deaf Youth	Business Services Organisation
Action On Hearing Loss	CARA Friend
Age NI	Carers Northern Ireland
Alliance Party of Northern Ireland	Carew 11 Family & Training Centre
Alzheimer's Society NI Belfast	CAUSE
Ardoyne Association Advice Centre	Centre for Independent Living
Ardoyne Community Centre	Children's Law Centre
Arthritis Care NI	Chinese Welfare Association Northern Ireland
Arts Council NI	Communication Workers Union
Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland	Community Development & Health Network NI
Autism NI	Community Foundation
Aware NI	Concorde Community Centre
Ballynafeigh Community Development Association	Co-Operation Ireland
Barnardo's Northern Ireland	Council for the Homeless NI
Belfast Bahá'í Community	Cregagh Youth & Community Centre
Belfast Chinese Christian Church	Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	DAERA
Belfast Islamic Centre	Dee Street Community Centre
Belfast Jewish Community	Democratic Unionist Party
Belfast Lions Club	Diocese of Connor
Brain Injury Matters	Disability Action
Braniel Community Centre	Disability Action NI
British Deaf Association NI	Disability Network Real

Disability Sports NI
Divis Community Centre
Donegall Pass Community Centre
East Side Partnership
Education Authority
Employers' Forum on Disability
Epilepsy Action NI
Equality Coalition
Equality Commission NI
Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland
Falls Community Council
Féile an Phobail
Finaghy Community Centre
Forbairt Feirste
Gay & Lesbian Youth in NI
Glen Road Community Centre
GMB
Greater Shankill Partnership Board
Green Party
Guide Dogs Northern Ireland
Hammer Community Centre
Here NI
Highfield Community Centre
Horn Drive Community Centre
Housing Rights
Indian Community Centre
Inverary Community Centre
Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Knocknagoney Community Centre
Lenadoon Community Forum
Ligoniel Community Centre
Markets Community Centre
Mencap Northern Ireland
Methodist Church in Ireland
Mind Wise NI
Morton Community Centre
MS Society NI
Multicultural Group-Windsor Women's Centre
NAS Northern Ireland
NASUWT Northern Ireland
National Children's Bureau Northern Ireland (NCB NI)
NDCS Northern Ireland
Neurological Alliance of Ireland
Newtownards Road Women's Group Ltd
NI Chest Heart and Stroke
NI Community Relations Council
NIACRO
NICVA
NIPSA
North Belfast Senior Citizen's Forum
North Queen Street Community Centre

Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce	Sandy Row Community Centre
Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers	Save the Children Fund
Northern Ireland European Women's Platform	Sense Northern Ireland
Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association	Shankill Women's Centre
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission	Shopmobility Belfast
Northern Ireland Muslim Family Association	Simon Community Northern Ireland
Northern Ireland Policing Board	Sinn Féin
NOW Group	Social Democratic and Labour Party
Oi Kwan Chinese Women's Group	South Belfast Partnership Board
Parkinson's UK in Northern Ireland	Sport Northern Ireland
People before Profit Alliance	Stroke Association NI
Play Resource	Suffolk Community Centre
Playboard	The Cedar Foundation
Pobal	The Communication Advice Centre
Police Service of Northern Ireland	The Focus Trust
Probation Board for Northern Ireland	Tourism Northern Ireland
Progressive Unionist Party	Traditional Unionist Voice
Queen's University Belfast	Tullycarnet Community Centre
QueerSpace	UCU Northern Ireland
Rainbow Project	Ulster Unionist Party
RNIB	Ulster-Scots Community Network
Royal British Legion	UNISON NI
Rural Development Council NI	Unite The Union
	University of Atypical
	USEL
	Victim Support NI

Visual Access (NI) Ltd
Volunteer Now
WAVE Trauma Centre
West Belfast Partnership Board
Whiterock Community Centre
Windsor Women's Centre
Women's Aid Federation N.I.
Women's Forum Northern Ireland
Women's Resource & Development
Agency
Women's Support Network
Woodvale Community Centre
Workers Party
Youth Council for Northern Ireland
Youth for Christ Northern Ireland
Youth Initiatives
Youth Justice Agency
Youth Link Northern Ireland
YouthAction Northern Ireland

APPENDIX 2: MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS BETWEEN AUGUST AND NOVEMBER 2022

The following organisations gave generously of their time expertise during the public consultation.

Thanks also to other individuals, groups and organisations who took part but cannot be named below.

Aisling Productions Ltd	Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Carers Network	Colin Glen Trust
AMMA Creative Learning Centre	Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Physical and Sensory Disability Services	Conway Mill Preservation Trust
An Droichead	Belfast International Airport	CQ Trust
Arts and Business NI	Belfast Media Festival	Creative Schools EANI
Arts Council of Northern Ireland	Belfast Migrants Forum	Creative Tours Belfast
Aura Digital Studios Ltd	Belfast One BID Ltd	Crescent Arts Centre
BBC NI	Belfast Stories Equity Steering Group	DAERA
BBC Rewind	Belfast Toastmasters	Destination CQ Bid
Belfast Buildings Trust	Bigg Life Arts	Digital Arts Studios
Belfast City Council ABLE Forum	Blackstaff Residents Associates	DOCS Ireland
Belfast City Council Disability Advisory Panel	British Council NI	Doubleband films
Belfast City Council Equality Consultative Forum	Cara Friend	DU Dance (NI)
Belfast City Council PROUD Network	Cathedral Quarter arts Festival	East Belfast Community Development Association
Belfast City Council Women's Network	Causeway Pictures	EastSide Partnership
Belfast Exposed	Cinemagic	EastSide Visitor Centre
Belfast Festivals Forum	Circusful/Festival of Fools	Equity Steering Group
Belfast Film Institute	Clifton House	Excalibur Press Ltd
Belfast Harbour	Coiste na nIarchimi	Failte Feirste Thiar
		Feile an Phobail
		Fighting Words NI
		Film HUB NI
		Food NI
		G6 Older Peoples Forum

Gallaghers Films Ltd	NI Opera	The MAC
General Public attendees	NI Science Festival	The Nerve Centre
Grand Opera House	NI Screen	Titanic Belfast
Greater Shankill Partnership	NI Screen – Digital Film Archive	Tourism NI
Greater Village Regeneration Trust	Oh Yeah Music Centre	Townsend Enterprise Park
Green Shoot Productions	On the Square Emporium	U3A
Harriott Communications	PaperxClips	Ulster Architectural Heritage
Hastings Hotel	Portview Trade Centre	Ulster Orchestra
Heart Project	PRONI	Ulster Scots Agency
ICC Belfast	Queen’s Film Theatre	Ulster Tatler
Indian Women's Association	Queen’s University Belfast	Ulster Touring Opera
Innate Films Ltd	Ramada by Wyndham Belfast	Ulster University
INTO Film	RNIB	University of Atypical
Italic Pig	RSUA	Victims and Survivors Service
James Connolly Visitor Centre	Sailortown Regeneration	Visit Belfast
KarmaDinosaur Media	Screen Skills	Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Advisory Panel
Kippie CIC	Shared City Partnership	Volunteer Now
Libraries NI	Sign Language Users Forum	Walking Tours Belfast
Linenhall Library	Sonic Arts Research Centre	West Belfast Heritage Community Initiative
Maiden Voyage Dance	Source Photographic Review	White Pot Studios
Makematic Ltd	Spectrum Centre	YEHA
Maritime Belfast Trust	Strand Arts Centre	Young at Art
National Autistic Society NI	Sustrans	
National Lottery Heritage Fund	The Beannchor Group	
National Trust	The Clover Group	
NI Environment Link	The Horatio Group	

APPENDIX 3: BELFAST'S POPULATION BY SECTION 75 DIMENSION

RELIGIOUS BELIEF

On Census Day 2011, 49 per cent of Belfast City Council's usual residents were from a Catholic community background compared with 42 per cent from a Protestant or other Christian related background.

POLITICAL OPINION

In the last local government election held on 2 May 2019, 28.2 per cent of first preference votes were cast for Sinn Féin; 21.6 per cent for the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP); 15.7 per cent for the Alliance Party; 9.1 per cent for the Social, Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP); 6.2 per cent for the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP); 6.0 per cent for the Green Party; 5.2 per cent for the People before Profit Alliance; and 3.1 per cent for the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP). A total of 60 councillors were elected to Belfast City Council. The table below provides an overview of the number of councillors by each political party.

Political Party	Number of councillors elected
Sinn Féin	18
Democratic Unionist Party	15
Alliance Party	10
Social Democratic and Labour Party	6
Green Party	4
People before Profit Alliance	3
Ulster Unionist Party	2
Progressive Unionist Party	2

ETHNIC GROUP

Country of birth statistics taken from the last census in 2011 show that 6.55 per cent of all usual residents were born outside the UK and Ireland. Almost a third of this group (2.1 per cent of all residents) were born in the Middle East and Asia.

The 2011 census also found that 95 per cent of Belfast's population (aged 3 years and over) have English as their main language; 1.4 per cent state "other" as their main language; and 1.2 per cent have Polish as their main language.

AGE

Based on the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's mid-year population estimates for 2020, the age profile of Belfast is similar to that of the wider region. Almost one in five residents (19.9 per cent) are aged under 16, slightly lower than the Northern Ireland average (20.9 per cent). The working age population (aged 16 to 64 years) make up two-thirds (65.1 per cent) of all Belfast residents. Older people (aged 65 and over) currently account for 15.0 per cent of the Belfast population.

The population aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 74.4 per cent to 498,500 people from mid-2014 to mid-2039, with the result that one in four people (24.7 per cent) will be in this age category.

MARITAL STATUS

According to the 2011 census, just over one third (35.6 per cent) of all usual residents in Belfast (aged 16+) are married – a relatively low proportion when compared with the Northern Ireland average (47.6 per cent). Belfast has a higher percentage (45.3 per cent) of residents who are single when compared with the Northern Ireland average (36.1 per cent). There is also a higher-than-average proportion of people in Belfast who are separated (5.4 per cent compared to 4 per cent NI average) and divorced (6.2 per cent to 5.5 per cent NI average). Belfast also has 353 residents (0.1 per cent) who are in a registered same-sex civil partnership, almost a third of all such partnerships in Northern Ireland.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Several UK- and NI-based studies have attempted to quantify the number of people who identify as LGBTQ+. Estimates for the LGBTQ+ population range from 0.3 to 10 per cent using different sources. A commonly used estimate of LGBTQ+ people in the UK, accepted by Stonewall UK, is approximately 5 to 7 per cent of the population.

MEN AND WOMEN GENERALLY

According to the 2011 census, Belfast has a higher female population (52 per cent of all residents), slightly higher than the Northern Ireland average of 51 per cent. The difference is largest in the over 65 population where 59.3 per cent of all residents are female.

DISABILITY

Census figures show that almost one quarter (23 per cent) of Belfast residents have a long-term health problem or disability which affects their day-to-day activities. This is a higher proportion than the Northern Ireland average (20.1 per cent). Over one-third of Belfast residents reported that they had a long-term condition (defined as a condition which has

lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months). The most common conditions were mobility or dexterity difficulty (39 per cent of all those affected), pain or discomfort (34 per cent), shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (31 per cent) and emotional, psychological or mental health condition (23 per cent).

2.02 per cent or 6,729 Belfast residents are blind or have partial sight loss.

DEPENDENTS

According to the 2011 Census, 30.4 per cent of households in Belfast include dependent children compared with the NI average of 36.5 per cent. 11.0 per cent of households consist of a lone parent and a dependent child or children, compared with the NI average of 8.1 per cent. Lone parents are considered at greater risk of economic disadvantage than other household types with an estimated 39 per cent of people living in a lone parent household living in relative poverty. Over 94 per cent of lone parents in Belfast are female.

11.8 per cent of Belfast residents provide unpaid care for a dependant adult, slightly higher than the NI average of 11.0 per cent.

APPENDIX 4: CONSULTEES ENGAGED PRIOR TO AUGUST 2022

ATTENDED WORKSHOPS OR MEETING DURING DEVELOPMENT OF THE STORY COLLECTION FRAMEWORK

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. National Museums NI | 16. Visit Belfast |
| 2. Golden Thread Gallery | 17. Thrive |
| 3. Prison memory Archive | 18. Tenx9 |
| 4. Belfast Exposed | 19. Kabosh Theatre |
| 5. NI Digital Archive | 20. Maritime Trust |
| 6. Tourism NO | 21. EastSide Partnership |
| 7. Tinderbox Theatre | 22. CQ Trust |
| 8. TourGuides NI | 23. NI Screen |
| 9. Nerve Centre | 24. PRONI |
| 10. Linen Hall Library | 25. Fighting Words |
| 11. Libraries NI | 26. Arts Council NI |
| 12. QUB | 27. Heritage Lottery Fund |
| 13. Visit West Belfast | 28. NI Good Food |
| 14. Tourism Ireland | 29. Cinemagic |
| 15. Ulster University | |

OTHER PRESENTATIONS AND MEETINGS

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Queens Film Theatre | 9. NI Libraries |
| 2. National Museums NI | 10. Destination CQ |
| 3. NI Screen | 11. CastleCourt Complex |
| 4. Department for Communities | 12. NI Connections |
| 5. Tourism NI | 13. Belfast Metropolitan College |
| 6. Department for the Economy | 14. Translink |
| 7. Ulster University | 15. HSCNI |
| 8. BID ONE | 16. Linen Quarter BID |

17. St Annes Cathedral
18. Visit Belfast
19. CQ Trust Board
20. Belfast Charitable Society
21. Heritage Lottery Fund
22. Belfast Civic Trust
23. Ashton Centre
24. NI Tourism Alliance
25. Social Enterprise NI
26. NI Community Relations Council
27. Hospitality Ulster
28. Strand Arts Centre
29. Belfast City Centre Management
30. North Belfast Heritage Cluster
31. Markets Development Association
32. EastSide Partnership
33. Carrick Hill Residents Associations
34. South Belfast Partnership /
Forward South
35. Arts Council NI
36. The Oh Yeah Music centre
37. Titanic Distillery
38. Maritime Belfast
39. The British Council
40. Ulster Architectural heritage
Group
41. Greater Shankill Area Partnership
42. Belfast Hills Partnership
43. Arts and Business
44. Visit West Belfast
45. Smithfield and Union
representatives
46. St Patrick's Church
47. Belfast Harbour
48. Urban Villages
49. Brown's Square
50. Sailortown Regeneration
51. Proud / Able / Women's internal
BCC Fora
52. East Belfast community
Development Agency
53. Greater Belfast's Seniors Forum
54. Historic Environment Division
55. BCC Youth Forum
56. University of the Atypical
57. Sign Language Users Forum
58. Healthy North Belfast
59. Belfast Charitable Society

APPENDIX 5: ENGAGEMENT WITH CULTURE AMONG EQUALITY GROUPS

The main source of statistical information is the Continuous Household Survey. It is used by the NI Statistics and Research Agency to produce official statistics for the Department for Communities (DfC).¹⁶ Its figures relate to the whole of NI.

Thrive, the audience development agency, carried out Belfast-specific research in 2016/17. It also looked in more detail at different types of culture (such as popular and cultural film, music, heritage and outdoor events).

RELIGIOUS BELIEF

According to DfC in 2020/21, people from the two main religions, Catholic and Protestant, were equally as likely (86 per cent) to engage with culture (including arts, libraries, museums, PRONI and places of historic interest). 89 per cent of people of other or no religion engaged in culture, although the margin of error in the statistics means the difference may not be significant.

ETHNIC GROUP

There is currently no regularly published local government or NI data relating to the ethnic background of those engaging in culture and arts.

In GB, research has found that people from White or Mixed ethnic backgrounds are more likely to engage with the arts than people from Black or Asian minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.¹⁷

People from minority ethnic groups can face multiple social, economic and cultural barriers to sports, arts and other cultural engagement. These barriers to participation may include communications and language; perceived irrelevance of arts to own culture; money; lack of transport; and lack of time and timings of events.

Diversity means that people see others “like them” involved in culture and have their culture and experience reflected back in activity that is relevant and authentic. In 2020/21 the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) reported that 5 per cent of the workforce of their core-funded clients were from a minority ethnic background, while 24 per cent of core-funded activity specifically targeted minority ethnic groups.¹⁸

¹⁶ www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/dfc-statistics-and-research

¹⁷ See, for example, www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taking-part-201920-arts/arts-taking-part-survey-201920

¹⁸ <http://artscouncil-ni.org/research-and-development/research-publications>

AGE

People tend to engage less with culture and arts as they get older, and those aged 65 and over are least likely to engage. The decline continues as people reach 75 and older. A lot of research identifies older people as the demographic group where there is greatest inequality and that is most difficult to engage. However, there are also differential impacts depending on type of culture and activity (sports, arts, heritage, participation, attendance, and so on).

Thrive's 2016/17 audience baseline found that older people are more likely to watch a cultural film (arthouse, documentary or foreign language), participate in museums and heritage activity, attend literature events and use public archives than other ages.

It also identified that there is a likely correlation with marital status: that is, older, single people are less likely to engage with culture.

Having someone to go with may also be a barrier: the Age-friendly Belfast Plan 2018–21 found that one in five older people in Belfast do not have any close friends. This is higher for men (22 per cent compared to 16 per cent for women) and for those in the oldest age group.

Among other age groups, Thrive's research showed that cost is the main barrier for both 16- to 24-year-olds and 45- to 54-year-olds. Twenty-five- to 34-year-olds are time-poor because of their social lives, but 35- to 44-year-olds are time-poor because of family and work.

Research in England has found that outdoor arts audiences tend to be representative of the demographics of the public in their area.¹⁹ However, Thrive found that this is not the case in NI where outdoor audiences tend to skew younger. There may be practical and societal barriers such as ableism – 1 in every 2 people aged over 65 in Belfast has a disability or long-term health condition – and lack of transport or seating. This means that there is an opportunity to learn from the diversity of outdoor events in GB.

MARITAL STATUS

According to DfC, in 2020/21 married or cohabiting and single people (88 per cent) were more likely than separated or divorced and widowed people (82 per cent and 71 per cent respectively) to engage with culture. Barriers to engagement may include cost and lack of people to go with.

¹⁹ The Audiences Agency, "Outdoor Arts Audience Report: What Audience Finder says about audiences for the Outdoor Arts", 2018

As outlined above, Thrive's 2016/17 audience baseline indicates there is a likely correlation between age, marital status and cultural engagement.

SEXUALITY

ACNI's Annual Funding Survey 2020/21 reports that 22 per cent of core-funded activity specifically targets LGBTQ+ communities.²⁰ However, there is little information on rates of cultural attendance and participation among this community. Barriers to participation may include services designed on the assumption that the users are heterosexual and events and activities that are not reflective of their culture.

MEN AND WOMEN GENERALLY

Women are historically more likely to engage in culture than men, although the gap appears to be closing: according to DfC in 2020/21, 88 per cent of women in NI engaged with culture compared to 85 per cent of men (the difference is not statistically significant).

There are also differences depending on type of culture and activity (sports, arts, heritage, participation, attendance, and so on). However, there were few areas that Thrive found to be a little more popular with men. These included certain types of music (techno/electronic, jazz/Blues and folk/trad/world music), comedy and public archives.

There are also differences according to multiple identities: for example, young men are harder to engage than young women or men generally; they are much less likely to participate in activities such as reading; but they are much more likely to engage in some digital culture such as playing computer games.

DISABLED PEOPLE

According to DfC, in 2019/20 disabled people were less likely to engage in arts than people without disabilities (77 per cent compared to 90 per cent) or to visit a place of historic interest (47 per cent compared to 62 per cent).

Thrive found the difference greatest in these activities.

1. Watching a mainstream film on general released in a cinema or venue
2. Attending big outdoor event
3. Visiting a museum or historical exhibition
4. Attending rock, pop or country music
5. Visiting a National Trust property

²⁰ <http://artscouncil-ni.org/research-and-development/research-publications>

6. Reading books or eBooks
7. Watching a mainstream film on general release: at home or in private
8. Visiting any other historic site (castle, ruin, historic church or cathedral)
9. Watching a documentary, foreign language or arthouse film: at home or in private
10. Attending a play or drama

According to the ACNI, disabled audiences are more likely to feel uncomfortable or out of place (10 per cent compared to 2 per cent compared to the general population), lack transport (11 per cent compared to 3 per cent) and have access to the facilities they need at an activity (4 per cent compared to 0.3 per cent).²¹

PEOPLE WITH DEPENDANTS

Historically, people with dependants have been more likely to engage with culture, which may reflect the volume and variety of programming aimed at children and families. However, this gap appears to be closing: in 2020/21, DfC reported that 89 per cent of people with dependants engaged in culture compared to 85 per cent of people without dependants (the difference is not statistically significant).

There may be differential impacts for different groups with dependants, such as lone parents. It is also likely that people with caring responsibilities for older people and disabled people face additional barriers including transport, cost, time and need for respite care.

PARTICIPATION IN CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Evidence from recent Belfast City Council surveys suggests that younger people tend to be less involved in council consultation and engagement. For example, 2 per cent of respondents to a 2019 council survey were under 24 compared to 61 per cent who were aged 25 to 59.

Younger people are also less likely to feel that they are able to influence public policy. According to the 2020 Belfast residents' survey, 47.5 per cent of young people aged 16 to 24 agreed that "I am able to have a say on how services are run, what the priorities are or where investment is needed" compared to 59.5 per cent for the whole population across all ages.

According to the council's Equality Consultative Forum, people with caring responsibilities may find it difficult to take part in engagement opportunities, and the council's Putting You

²¹ www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Annual-Progress-Report-Disability-Action-Plan-2017-18.pdf

First customer service strategy notes that people with dependants may prefer to carry out business digitally due to demands on their time.

However, digital solutions do not work for everyone: according to Age-friendly Belfast, 51 per cent of people aged 65 and over in Belfast have never accessed the internet.

Putting You First: Transforming Customer Experiences also notes increasing challenges serving all customers due to language barriers and cultural differences.

APPENDIX 6: ORGANISATIONS THAT RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY

Twenty-one organisations responded to the survey. The following organisations gave permission to be named as participating in the public consultation. Names of individuals responding to the survey were not requested.

City of Belfast Youth Orchestra

Armstrong Storytelling trust

Fighting Words NI

Coiste na nIarchimí

Tread the Boards

Omniplex Cinemas

Sustrans

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
(PRONI)

Belfast Celtic Society

Translink

Victoria Square

Ulster Architectural Heritage

Northern Visions Media Centre

APPENDIX 7: WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Blackstaff Community Development Association

Belfast Civic Trust

INTBAU Ireland (the all-island chapter of the International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture and Urbanism).

Community Arts Partnership

Conradh na Gaeilge

Forbairt Feirste