

The Trust unveils 'Welcoming Diversity Art' at Shankill as part of celebrations for Community Relations Week



'Today's artwork is just one of the many actions taken by the Trust to promote good relations'

We are very proud to dedicate this fourth edition of the Belfast Trusts Good Relations Bulletin to celebrating the diversity of our staff and service users. Belfast Trust delivers its services to an increasingly culturally diverse population, it was therefore, fitting that the Trust took the opportunity to celebrate Community Relations and Cultural Awareness Week - **'One Place, Many People'** (27 Sept – 4 Oct).

Throughout the week, staff and service users got the opportunity to see for themselves the important initiatives and projects in which the Trust is involved that promote respect, dignity and reduce inequalities for service users and staff irrespective of their race, religion or political opinion. The highlight of the week, undoubtedly, was the unveiling of the 'Welcoming Diversity Art' by the Trust Chief Executive, Dr Michael McBride at Shankill Wellbeing and Treatment Centre. A range of distinguished guests including Councillor Arder Carson, the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Dr Michael Wardlow the Chief Commissioner from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Dympna McGlade, Director of Policy at the Community Relations Council, who part funded the artwork, and Helen Shields, Artist in Residence, Artscore were treated to an ethnic fusion of dance, music and song provided by St Mary's Primary School Choir, South Asian Dance Academy and Nalongo. Within this edition, we celebrate the growing richness and diversity of our staff featuring interviews with two staff members, one from Poland and one from the Traveller community who share their captivating stories and experiences. I would also like to congratulate the Traveller Women's Choir who gave an outstanding performance at a recent concert. We hope you enjoy this edition of our good relations bulletin.



Damian McAlister,
Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development



A Celebration of Traveller Culture



“This group is a good news story about Travellers, and a story that needs to be told”.

Chief Executive
Dr Michael
McBride

The Traveller Women’s choir

At a recent celebration of Traveller Culture, Chief Executive Dr Michael McBride reiterated the Trust’s commitment to supporting the Traveller Community in addressing the many health inequalities they face and to promote equal access to health services.

Performing at the event was a Traveller women’s singing group which Dr McBride praised, highlighting the physical, mental and emotional health benefits of engaging in group activities:

“This group is a good news story about Travellers, and a story that needs to be told. We are all aware of the physical health benefits of taking part in activities such as singing but there are so many other benefits for the women in terms of emotional health and wellbeing and their personal resilience.

But there are also benefits for the wider Traveller community also. By breaking down barriers, challenging racial stereotypes and putting forward a positive image we are sending out positive messages from a community that unfortunately remains marginalised and stigmatised.”

Bryson An Munia Tober, work with the Traveller Community on a Health and Wellbeing Programme supported by the Belfast Trust and the PHA. The Choir women are also involved in other health projects and some took part in creating the impressive art that was unveiled in the Shankill Wellbeing and Treatment Centre. The choir evolved from a challenge to take part in the Guinness World Record for the largest number of choirs in one place in Croke Park Dublin 2013. Since then the group has gone from strength to strength and have performed for the Lord Mayor of Belfast and in a range of venues from the City Hall to Titanic Belfast.



Staff Focus: Mary's Story – The Trust's First Traveller Community Health Worker

Mary McDonagh, a Traveller woman from Belfast, is celebrating 5 years working for the Belfast Trust as a Traveller Community Health Worker within the Community Development Team. Mary freely admits, "It's been a learning curve, but one that I wouldn't change for the world. The time has flown. I was so nervous when I first started and felt a bit out of my depth and even frightened sometimes but the support of managers, colleagues and staff was so helpful and supportive".



'It's been a journey and a real eye opener, but my confidence, knowledge and skills are building all the time'

Mary's modest and unassuming manner, hide the courage and tenacity required for a Traveller woman to take the bold step of working within a large health and social care Trust. Despite her initial apprehension, Mary has gone from strength to strength and has achieved so much in a relatively short period of time. Mary, in partnership with her Traveller colleagues in the Trust, Kathleen Maughan and Ned Doherty and other colleagues in her team, work to deliver the Trust Traveller Health Strategy. Mary's role includes signposting Travellers' to Trust Services, increasing Travellers' understanding of the different health and social services with a particular focus on Mental Health and Maternal & Child Health Services. As a Traveller, Mary has first-hand knowledge of the health inequalities experienced by Travellers. She was born in a caravan on a site by the side of the road in the west of the province, the family moved to Belfast when she was two and she has lived on caravan sites most of her life. Mary has two children, Annie who is married and Stephen who passed away at a young age 7 years ago. Mary says she really enjoys working for the Trust and working with the Traveller community to identify their health and social care needs. Mary particularly enjoys meeting other staff and works with Trust staff to raise their awareness and understanding of the specific needs of the Traveller community and the potential barriers to services. "I really appreciate the opportunity to work for the Trust and hope many more Travellers will follow my footsteps."

Working with Traveller Women and the area of mental health are of particular interest to Mary. "I like working with the Women's Group and providing information and advice. I also like working in mental health. The Traveller community, like the general population, have to address mental health. For Traveller men, the suicide rate is 6 times that of men in the general population. I have also had personal experiences and would like to be able to help other people".



Shankill Welcomes Diversity Art with a Feast of Cultural Festivities

“The promotion of good relations and equality are intrinsically linked to the Trust’s overall purpose of improving health and social care and reducing health inequalities”.

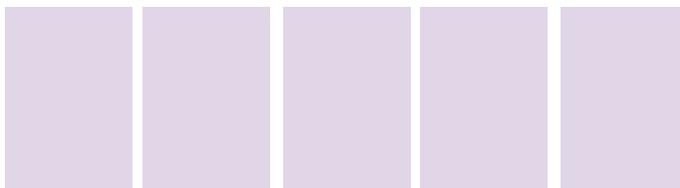
Chief Executive
Dr Michael McBride



L-R Chief Executive, Belfast Trust, Dr Michael McBride, Belfast Lord Mayor, Arder Carson, Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, Belfast Trust, Damian McAlister, Chief Executive of the Public Health Agency, Eddie Rooney and Chief Commissioner at the Equalities Commission for Northern Ireland, Michael Wardlow

The Trust Chief Executive, Dr Michael McBride and the Trust Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, Damian McAlister and a host of other dignitaries as well as service users and staff, were treated to a carnival of culture at the Shankill Wellbeing and Treatment Centre to celebrate the unveiling of ‘Welcoming Diversity Art’ during Community Relations Week – One place, many people. The art, which was unveiled by Dr McBride, depicts a colourful plethora of cultural and ethnic symbols of welcome including the word ‘Welcome’ in 29 languages. The artwork was completed by a wide range of diverse groups and individuals from across Belfast during an inclusive ‘Art Fest’ organised by Belfast Trust and facilitated by the Artist in Residence Helen Shields. The ethos of the art is to act as a message of welcome to everyone who enters each of the Trust Wellbeing and Treatment Centres irrespective of race, religion or political opinion. Participants used their handprints, cultural symbols and welcome in their own language to create a multi-coloured welcome message. The Art work is part of the Trust Good Relations Strategy which demonstrates the Trust’s commitment to promoting good relations for staff and service users and providing services in a safe and welcoming environment to ensure our centres are shared spaces for everyone.

Celebrations began with the delightful sound of St Mary’s Primary School Choir, made up of children from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds. Their dulcet tones greeted everyone as they arrived.

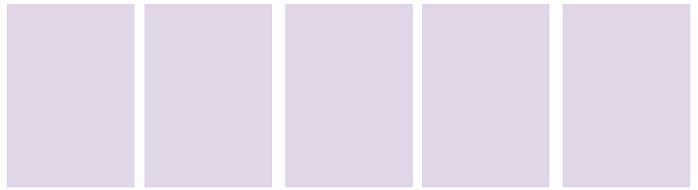


Above, St Mary's Primary School Choir with Head Mistress, Mary Harbinson and Choir Mistress Martine McSorley

Following the school's performance, the Trust Chief Executive, Dr Michael McBride formally welcomed everyone and highlighted the sterling good relations work carried out by the Trust, "I am pleased that so many of you have taken the time to come along to what will be a colourful, cultural and diverse event. I am proud to say that Belfast was the first Trust to develop

a Good Relations strategy "Healthy Relations for a Healthy Future" in 2012 –in which we make an explicit commitment to a proactive approach to the promotion of good relations and going beyond compliance". Dr McBride pointed out the importance of the Art in the Centres, "Todays artwork is just one of the many actions taken by the Trust to promote good relations – nonetheless this community engagement and art project typifies the Trust corporate objectives of being leading edge, fostering a culture of safety and excellence and working in partnership with a diverse range of individuals and community organisations. Well Being and Treatment Centres are strategically located at the heart of communities to ensure ease of access to services for all the community. It is important that centres provide a welcoming and safe environment for everyone. We hope that through this initiative our Trust Well Being and Treatment Centres will be further regarded as welcoming and accessible shared space for everyone regardless of whom they are or where they are from".





Partnership working

Speaking at the Shankill Wellbeing and Treatment Centre, the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, Mr Damian McAlister, emphasised the importance of partnership working to promote good relations.



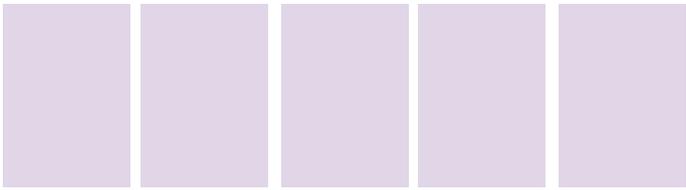
“We firmly believe that working in partnership with staff, users, the community, Section 75 organisations, statutory organisations and other key stakeholders is pivotal to the success of promoting good relations and a healthy future.”

Mr McAlister acknowledged the work carried out by the Trust, “We have a significant track record of being proactive and innovative in our work with people from different backgrounds and different ethnic minorities. Our Equality and Community Development teams have forged strong networks and partnerships with ethnic minorities. We firmly believe that working in partnership with staff, users, the community, Section 75 organisations, statutory organisations and other key stakeholders is pivotal to the success of promoting good relations and a healthy future.

Strategic Group

The day was also a day of celebration for the Trust Good Relations Strategic Group (below left) who developed the Good Relations Strategy and oversee the implementation of the strategy and action plan. The group which is chaired by Trust Co Director of Human Resources, Joan Peden, comprises of internal and external members which includes key Trust staff from the Chaplaincy service, Community development, Health and Social Inequalities and Children’s Community Service. External groups include Alternatives NI, the Community Relations Council, the South Belfast Round Table on Racism, Belfast City Council and the East Belfast Community Development Agency





Artistic Direction

ArtsCare artist, Helen Shields, (left) who facilitated the art work for each of the centres, highlighted the importance of art in health and wellbeing and how it can contribute to the promotion of good relations. Helen described how a range of artistic techniques were used to encourage participants to produce eye catching symbols and language which would represent their culture and background. Many participants chose to draw an outline of their own hands and fill with shapes, language and colours of their choice resulting in a spectacular array of colours and welcoming signs.



Celebrations close with a flavour of Indian and African music and dance

Below, Chelsea and Jade from the South Asian Dance Academy performed an Indian dance routine dressed in traditional Indian costume.



The Shankill Wellbeing and Treatment Centre was filled with the distinctive sound of African drums and music performed by the group 'Nalonga'. Adorned in traditional African clothing, the group's singer, Donna (right), provided a lively performance of a native African dance from Uganda.





Staff Focus: Ella from Poland – came to Belfast for 6 months and decided to stay!

Trust staff member Ella, full name, Elzbieta Jokubolncz, arrived from Poland in 2007 to visit her cousin intending to stay for 6 months but fate and her fondness for Belfast resulted in her not going home.



“When I first arrived in Belfast, I intended to stay with my cousin for a few months and then return home, but then I met my husband Greg here, who is also Polish, through a friend of a friend, now we are married with two children and I never went home. We like living in Northern Ireland and find the people very easy going and friendly”

“It is good for the Trust to have a good relations policy, it makes me feel respected, valued, safe and welcome”

Ella explained that when she first arrived here, she immediately set about looking for a job and was sitting in an interview just 5 hours later. She worked at a couple of jobs before she eventually got a job with the Belfast Trust. “I used to work in the kitchen at Meadowlands, I really enjoyed that job but then I had my children and had to reduce my hours. I now work as a Domestic Cleaner at Mckinney House at Musgrave Park with Patient Client Support Services. I find the salary here much better than in Poland and the working conditions are much more flexible for families. When I got pregnant I got support and maternity leave.”

Ella is from Olsztyn in North East Poland. “It is very beautiful, we have 7 lakes, it is very similar to Northern Ireland, but it rains much more here. I have had to explain to my 6 year old son Anthony and my 5 year old daughter Hannah why Ireland is so green.”

The Trust having a Good Relations Strategy which embraces diversity and promotes good relations is very important to Ella, “It is good for the Trust to have a good relations policy, it makes me feel respected, valued, safe and welcome. I appreciate the opportunity to live and work here and hope that everyone else feels the same”.

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