



North West  
Migrants Forum



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024 - 2025

✉ [info@nwmf.org.uk](mailto:info@nwmf.org.uk)

☎ +44 (0) 28 7136 2184

🌐 [www.nwmf.org.uk](http://www.nwmf.org.uk)

📘 @North West Migrants Forum

✕ @nwmforum

📷 @northwestmigrantsforum

📍 2nd & 3rd floor, Embassy Building,

3 Strand Road

Derry/Londonderry, BT48 7BH

# Administration details

## North West Migrants Forum



**Charity Number:** 103178

**Principal Address:** 2nd & 3rd Floor, Embassy Building, 3 Strand Road, Derry, BT48 7BH

**Auditor:** Laurie Duffy; FCA L Duffy & Co Chartered Accountants & Registered Auditors, 12 Queen Street, Derry, BT48 7EG

**Bank:** Danske Bank

**Chairperson:** Marija Stuke

**Treasurer:** Irina Chernichenko

**Board Members:** Munadel Bazzara, Ibrahim Dandousha, Cristina Kozak, Idris Mohammed, Philip McDermott (from September 19 2023), Paul Sceeny (until June 2024)

**Policy and Strategic Planning Advisors:** Hannah Davies, Philip McDermott (also Director from September 19 2023), Beverly Simpson and Mike Waldron

 [info@nwmf.org.uk](mailto:info@nwmf.org.uk)

 [www.nwmf.org.uk](http://www.nwmf.org.uk)



# About North West Migrants Forum



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The North West Migrants Forum (NWMF) is the only organisation of its kind in the north west region of Northern Ireland with a long track record of delivering effective programmes to support migrant, Black and ethnic minoritised people who are rarely centred when it comes to service provision and health and well-being programmes.

NWMF is an independent charity registered in Northern Ireland (Registered charity number: NIC 107318). The organisational structure is comprised of trustees who operate within the framework of the aims of the organisation.

NWMF delivers grassroots-led, front-line support services based on the identified need. It makes representations to the public sector, to the private sector and to government.

NWMF works to promote the benefits of migrants, people seeking international protection, people granted international protection and their families. The organisation works primarily, but not exclusively, with those living in the north west region of Northern Ireland and its surrounding areas. We work with and bring together statutory authorities, community and voluntary organisations, residents and members in a common effort to promote improved access to services, equality of opportunity, racial harmony and diversity.

We work to relieve need, hardship and distress among beneficiaries and their families through the provision of information, advice, support and representation. We also work to promote positive mental health, social inclusion, integration and good community relations through the provision of educational, social and well-being and multicultural activities.

## Our vision & mission

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### Our Vision

**Our vision is to change lives and transform the narrative around black and minoritised communities.**

**We do this through tackling prejudice and stereotypes, normalising access to services and promoting respect, fairness, equality and success.**

### Our Mission

**Our key mission is to promote the benefit of migrants, international students, people seeking international protection, people granted international protection and their families.**

# Chairperson's Report

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the 2024/25 annual report for the North West Migrants Forum.

This past financial year has once again been one of growth, challenge and change for our organisation.

In terms of administrative shifts there were several.

Our Community Liaison Officer Aynaz Zarif and her husband Masood left Derry for England. While her departure was a loss in terms of the day-to-day office environment, we were extremely fortunate that Aynaz agreed to continue her work with the Migrants Forum in a remote capacity.

Following the resignation of our Community and Welfare Officer, Al Albawab, we recruited Gaëlle Gormley who brought with her a wealth of experience and knowledge. Dominic Nartey also started work on a part-time basis, helping ease the growing welfare caseload.

As our Embassy Building headquarters became increasingly busy, we drafted in Ei Mon Thant to oversee the running of our Social Café.

And by collaborating with our colleagues in the Committee on the Administration of Justice we were able to employ Shannon Doherty as a Project Research and Campaigns Worker, focusing on racial justice, migrant rights and engaging minority communities in politics.

In June 2024 our CEO Lilian Seeno Barr made history when she became Northern Ireland's first Black mayor. With Lilian's duties taking her the length and breadth of the island, Paul Sceeny was appointed as interim manager and I want to put on record my gratitude to Paul for stepping up.

With conflicts erupting or escalating globally - in Gaza, Sudan, Ukraine and elsewhere - countless individuals and families were forced to seek safety outside their home countries.

Those who made it to Derry almost inevitably found their way to the North West Migrants Forum where they sought assistance with issues such as housing, GPs and dentists, education, visas and financial matters.

Not everyone was sympathetic to the plight of those arriving on our shores though and over the summer months of 2024 riots broke out in Belfast which led to businesses being looted and homes and cars damaged.

While the unrest stopped short of Derry, it did give cause for concern and led to several multi-agency meetings involving the PSNI, Derry City and Strabane District Council and other organisations like our own who were fearful for the safety of their members.



The unpleasantness failed though to dampen our collective commitment to fostering positive change across the island of Ireland.

Our Advancing Race Equality Awards proved once again to be a huge success, as did our Black History Summit which moved out of Derry for the first time. Kenneth B Morris, direct descendant of Frederick Douglass, flew in from the USA to be our keynote speaker at Ulster University Belfast.

In July our annual fun day took place in Brooke Park and drew upwards of 300 people on what was a beautifully sunny afternoon.

Our Social Café continued to be a vital outlet for reducing isolation, building connections, holding activities, workshops and meetings as well as English language classes.

The dedication of our team meant we were also able to continue progressing projects such as Let's Talk Race and Racism, Racial Justice in NI: Influencing Lasting Change, Black Heritage: Hidden History in Northern Ireland, New Beginnings: Building Pathways to a Shared Future and the youth-led Future Communities project.

This is just the briefest snapshot of the work that has gone on and I believe later in the report you will see a numerical breakdown of the services delivered by the Migrants Forum over the past 12 months.

Together we are creating a positive and lasting impact on lives and communities and as chairperson, I once again extend my gratitude to our dedicated team, partners, funders and supporters.

# Chief Executive's Report



2024–2025 was a year of profound change for the North West Migrants Forum and for me personally. In June 2024, I had the honour of becoming Mayor, while continuing, in a limited way, to serve as Chief Executive to oversee the implementation of vital projects. Holding both roles, first citizen and CEO of a migrant-led organisation, was powerful and humbling, and at times deeply challenging. We navigated a shifting political landscape, rising anti-immigrant sentiment across the globe that echoed here at home, and a significant increase in the number of people seeking sanctuary who chose to make Derry their new beginning. Amid these headwinds, our organisation did what it has always done best: we showed up, we listened, and we delivered. We welcomed new funders who believed in our mission. We strengthened our programmes so that people arriving in our city and district could find their footing with dignity. And we kept building the relationships that are essential to a truly shared, inclusive future.

None of this would have been possible without our extraordinary people. I cannot thank our staff and volunteers enough for keeping the organisation moving forward with compassion and resolve. During this period, we were joined by our interim Manager, Paul Sceeny, whose steady leadership ensured continuity when it mattered most.

Our Media and Communications Officer, Conor Sharkey, stepped up with courage and became our overall Director, helping to steer strategy and amplify the voices that too often go unheard. Aynaz Zarif, Programme Manager for our Heritage Project, took on additional projects to keep everything running smoothly. Our Integration Officers, Gaelle and Dominic, became the beacon of our day-to-day work, ensuring that families and individuals could access the support they needed. And our Board was more engaged than ever, providing direction, scrutiny, and solidarity through every high and low.

As the Chief Executive who was absent from the office much of the time due to mayoral duties, I want to pay a sincere and public tribute to our staff, volunteers, and Board members for their outstanding work over a very demanding year. You carried the mission with integrity and heart. You kept faith with our communities. You made sure no one was left behind.

To our funders, longstanding partners and those who joined us this year, thank you for standing with us. In the face of pressure from some quarters to reduce or withdraw support, you recognised the importance of what we do: bringing communities together, defending human rights, and advancing a vision of a united and inclusive Ireland that respects difference and celebrates diversity. Your trust enabled us to keep doors open, programmes running, and hope alive.

Our projects this year speak to the core of who we are. The Racial Justice Project continued to create space for dialogue, engagement, and learning, bringing communities and policymakers together to challenge prejudice and change attitudes. A Fairer Future: Migration Justice Fund, in partnership with CAJ, allowed us to campaign actively and engage with high-profile government officials, trade unions, and elected representatives, not merely to raise issues, but to help shape policy. The day-to-day work supported by the National Lottery Community Fund gave people seeking sanctuary the practical starting point they need to build lives here.

And our Co-op funds, supporting programmes for young people, empowered the next generation to lead with confidence, creativity, and care. Each of these strands is part of a larger story: a community choosing connection over division, hope over fear, and justice over complacency.

The work is demanding. The context is often difficult. But the courage of the people we serve and the commitment of those who stand beside them gives us renewed strength to continue. To everyone who has been part of this journey, participants, partners, staff, volunteers, Board members, and funders, thank you. You are the reason North West Migrants Forum remains a trusted, effective, and compassionate force for change.

We will keep going, until racial justice is a lived reality, and all our communities live side by side in harmony.

# Our funders & supporters



# KEY HIGHLIGHTS

2024 - 2025



Unrest both globally and locally meant it was another extremely busy 12 months for the North West Migrants Forum. Despite the challenges, we pushed ahead with our campaigning, our flagship events like our Black History Summit and our family fun day as well as our various workshops and activities. Not forgetting of course our normal day to-day support and services.

## LITTLE AMAL'S VISIT

May 20 2024 was a proud day for us, the day we helped orchestrate Little Amal's first ever visit to Derry. Little Amal is the 12 foot puppet of a 10-year-old Syrian refugee child at the heart of The Walk. She has become a global symbol of human rights, especially those of refugees.

Since July 2021, Amal has travelled to 160 towns and cities in 16 countries and been welcomed by two million people on the street and by tens of millions online. In Derry, hundreds of people turned out to help escort Amal across the Peace Bridge and into Guildhall Square.



## LILIAN'S INAUGURATION

Our CEO Lilian Seenoi Barr made history on June 3 2024 when she became Northern Ireland's first ever Black mayor.

Hundreds of people packed into Derry's Guildhall to witness the moment, among them a delegation of high-ranking Kenyan Government officials including Mrs Barr's brother, Senator Ledama Olekina.

There was a standing ovation and prolonged round of applause as the Guildhall watched outgoing Mayor Patricia Logue hand over the Chain of Office.

Our CEO told those gathered, "I will be a mayor for everyone, one who is accessible and one who will lead with hope."



## ALL-PARTY GROUP SECRETARIAT

In June 2024 North West Migrants Forum was appointed Secretariat of Stormont's All-Party Group on Minority Ethnic Communities.

The All-Party Group was established to promote the rights of those from minoritised backgrounds and to tackle policy issues that impact minority ethnic communities in the North.

It has given us, and organisations like us, an avenue to engage directly with decision makers on how to move forward towards a Northern Ireland that is vibrant, diverse and inclusive for all.



## CROSS-CULTURAL CEILIDH

On August 31 2024 we joined forces with Ed Emery, musician, author, lecturer and activist, for an evening of Kurdish and Irish music in Derry's Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin.

It turned out to be an amazing night of dancing and joy as people from multiple backgrounds and cultures brought Cultúrlann to life.

Food, music, laughter – The perfect way to bring the curtain down on what was a less than stellar summer!





## SUMMER CLUB

Our Summer Club took place throughout July and August 2024 with youth leaders Adrián, Aoife, Caitlin and Molly returning to co-ordinate things.

And they did a sterling job with dozens of children enjoying trips to the cinema, to the bowling alley, to Foyle Arena and to St Columb's Park.

The weeks of fun were topped off with a two-day residential in Todd's Leap Activity Centre near Dungannon, making it a summer that will live long in the memory of all those who participated.

## BLACK HISTORY SUMMIT

Our annual Black History Summit took place in Ulster University Belfast on October 26 2024, the first time it was held in a venue outside Derry. Our keynote speaker was Kenneth B Morris, great-great-great grandson of social reformer, author and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Mr Morris made the trip from New York purely for our Summit, a commitment we were deeply humbled by.

It was also an opportunity for us to officially launch our 'Black Heritage in NI: The Hidden History Project', made possible by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

A truly momentous day and one that saw our Black History Summit move to a new level in terms of exposure.



## ADVANCING RACE EQUALITY AWARDS

Over 250 people gathered in The Ebrington Hotel on March 6 2025 for our fourth Advancing Race Equality Awards.

It was an incredible evening for many reasons, but mainly for the inspiring individuals and organisations whose work in tackling racism and breaking down barriers we celebrated.

Our host, author, activist and politician Chantelle Lunt, flew in from Liverpool just for the awards. She described it as a 'truly memorable night'.

# Our Year in Numbers

## Support & Advice

**1,483**

welfare support appointments  
delivered

**375**

individuals supported

## Learning, Skills & Wellbeing

● 205 activities delivered	1,875 people
● 118 English classes	1,049 learners
● 11 health & workshops	81 attendees
● 53 wellbeing activities	360 attendees
● 9 Education Authority support sessions	59 attendees

## Racial Literacy Workshops

**12**

Workshops  
delivered at  
schools...

**13**

...Delivered at  
Ulster University  
and NWRC

## SIM cards

**100**

Distributed  
through Charities  
Connected

## Bicycles

**30**

Given to members  
through collaboration  
with Life Cycles

## Digital Engagement

Facebook interactions

**17,390** ▲ 82%

Facebook net new followers

**403** ▲ 7%

These digital engagement figures relate to Facebook activity during the reporting period.

# REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES & ACTIVITIES

2024 - 2025



# New Beginnings Building Pathways to a Shared Future



## Immigration Advice, Information and Orientation Support

We provided practical immigration advice, information and enhanced orientation support to help individuals navigate essential services and settle into their communities. This included support to access healthcare, legal and education services, assistance with forms and appointments, referrals to specialist immigration advisors and local organisations and help meeting immediate needs such as food and basic essentials.

As part of this work, participants also benefited from targeted information sessions delivered in partnership with external agencies, including an eVisa clinic delivered by the **Jobs and Benefits Centre** and a housing information session delivered by the **Northern Ireland Housing Executive**.



We also delivered a range of family, social and cultural activities, alongside language learning and social café sessions, to promote connection and wellbeing. These included a weekly social café, Iranian Yalda Night, a Christmas celebration and our annual Family Fun Day.

Our Christmas celebration was held at our office and brought together families to enjoy a visit from Santa, alongside food prepared and shared by our members.

Our Family Fun Day was held in Brooke Park, bringing together hundreds of people to enjoy food, bouncy castles, face painting, circus activities, dancing, singing and other family-friendly entertainment.



# Racial Justice in Northern Ireland: Influencing Lasting Change

THE JOSEPH ROWNTREE CHARITABLE TRUST

*Joseph Rowntree*

The Racial Justice in Northern Ireland Project, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, has had a significant and wide-reaching impact. Through sustained engagement with a broad range of sectors across the North West, including local councillors, schools, PSNI, Ulster University and the wider community, the project has contributed to building dialogue, trust and greater understanding.

As part of this funding, we delivered a programme of information campaigns, regular public engagement and policy-focused activity. The fund contributed to a range of public engagement events, including the Black History Summit, the Advancing Race Equality Awards and activities delivered during Refugee Week, alongside support from other funding sources. The project also enabled sustained engagement with decision-makers through regular briefings and structured dialogue.

Our project has secured the Secretariat for the All-Party Group on Minority Ethnic Communities, a key strategic platform that enables us to influence policy and build relationships with policymakers, providing them with an accurate understanding of community realities. In this role we facilitated a series of thematic meetings to inform policy discussions, including:



- September 2024 – A response to a summer of far-right violence and intimidation
- October 2024 – The experiences of children within the asylum system (pre and post-decision)
- February 2025 – Mental health, trauma and wellbeing, alongside our AGM

In addition, NWMF sits on the Racial Equality Subgroup, an independent advisory body established by the Executive Office, ensuring minority ethnic communities are represented within strategic race equality discussions.



**North West Regional College awards Asylum Seeker Scholarships**

**North West Migrants Forum**  
Published by Conor Sharkey · May 24, 2024 ·  
It was our pleasure to have Kate Nicholl MLA, Rachael Ferguson Alliance Party Rep and their colleague Curtis join us here at NWMF headquarters yesterday. A good engagement and we look forward to meeting up again soon.  
Pictured L-R: Kate Nicholl MLA, our Welfare and Integration Officer Gaele Gormley and Rachael Ferguson.



**North West Migrants Forum**  
Published by Raifeer · October 18, 2024 ·  
Our team spent time this week with Western Health and Social Care Trust Social Workers, talking to them about Racial Literacy and Cultural Consciousness. We covered topics like understanding and challenging racism and culture/diversity on what was a really good day. They were one of the most enthusiastic groups of social workers we have ever encountered, ready to learn and to share their thoughts and knowledge. Thank you all for being so open and engaging. We took a lot away from the day, we hope you did too.



**North West Migrants Forum**  
Published by Raifeer · October 18, 2024 ·  
It has been quite the day for us all here at the North West Migrants Forum, supporting the Show Racism the Red Card campaign. From left, with their t-shirts and wristbands, are: Gaele, Paul, Nareyin, Conor, Eva and Eil Mon.  
#WRD24



# Black Heritage in NI; The Hidden History



In 2024, we secured delivery-phase funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, following an earlier development grant, enabling the launch of a three-year project running from October 2024 to 2027.

**BLACK  
HERITAGE  
IN NI**  
HIDDEN HISTORY



*Fisk Jubilee Singers*

Black Heritage in Northern Ireland: The Hidden History Project aims to uncover, document and celebrate the often-overlooked contributions of Black communities to Northern Ireland's history. The project will deliver original research, workshops for schools and organisations, an inclusive Black history curriculum, annual Black History Month Summits and a touring exhibition across Northern Ireland.



The first delivery milestone was achieved in October 2024 with the Black History Month Summit at Ulster University Belfast, which welcomed over 100 attendees. The event featured panel discussions with researchers, activists, experts and young people, alongside a keynote address by Kenneth B Morris. The programme also included cultural entertainment and traditional food prepared by members of African communities. Delivered in partnership with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Ulster University and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Summit received overwhelmingly positive feedback and provided a strong foundation for the project's delivery phase.



The project is supported by a specialist research team comprising Dr Naomi Green, Dr Eburn Joseph and Chantelle Lunt, bringing expertise in Black British and Irish history, race and migration studies, and community-centred heritage research. Dr Naomi Green, who managed the development phase, now leads the research strand of the project.

# Intercultural Community Café



We used our 2024 family fun day in Brooke Park to officially launch our 'Intercultural Community Café' project, made possible following a funding award from PEACEPLUS of £175,102.

Set to be developed on the second floor of the Embassy Building at 3 Strand Road, the café will create a space where the city and district's growing multi-culturalism can be celebrated and community integration enhanced.



The ambitious project is being supported by PEACEPLUS which is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). It is being funded through Derry City and Strabane District Council's PEACEPLUS Local Co-Designed Action Plan.



Our Chief Executive, Lilian Seenoi Barr, said that creating such a venue was one of her very first goals when she established the North West Migrants Forum back in 2012.

*"This project will see an unused premises in the heart of the city transformed into a busy, welcoming space where people of all backgrounds can come together to celebrate cultural diversity and where community cohesion can be strengthened,"* Mrs Barr said.

*"When I started the North West Migrants Forum 12 years ago the aim was to build a society that treats Black, racialised and minoritised communities, refugees and those seeking asylum with respect, fairness and equality.*

*"We have made huge strides towards that goal but our Intercultural Café will be an entirely new chapter for us and for the city and district. It will provide a physical space where individuals of all backgrounds and faiths can come together and where strong connections resulting in community-led transformation can be forged."*

**The café will comprise a working training kitchen and seating area where:**

- Weekly 'Drop-in and Catch-up' sessions will take place three days a week.
- Opportunities will be offered to under-represented communities, including Black and minoritised individuals as well as the long-term unemployed.
- Understanding and awareness of race-related issues will be promoted to support empathy and inclusivity.
- Cultural understanding between established and newer communities will be promoted.



Work on the Intercultural Café is well underway and is expected to be completed in early 2026.

# Tablets & mini library books

Our Halifax-funded project was a huge success with a range of services delivered, including women-only drop-in sessions, cooking workshops, a dedicated digital inclusion programme and the creation of a new mini multi-lingual library. There were 63 hours of drop-in sessions for women, with a total of 342 ladies attending the different workshops and activities.

As part of our digital inclusion programme, we purchased ten tablets, nine of which were distributed to families and one which we kept in-house at our office for use by our members. At least 166 people were supported through this digital inclusion programme which included a workshop on how to use the tablet.

Our senior service users reported increased confidence when using digital tools as well as a greater ability to browse and look for jobs. Younger members talked about how the tablets have helped them do their homework and register for training courses.

The feedback from those who received tablets highlighted just how important technology is for those coming to Derry as they need to keep in regular contact with solicitors, schools, medical practitioners, not to mention family members who remain overseas.

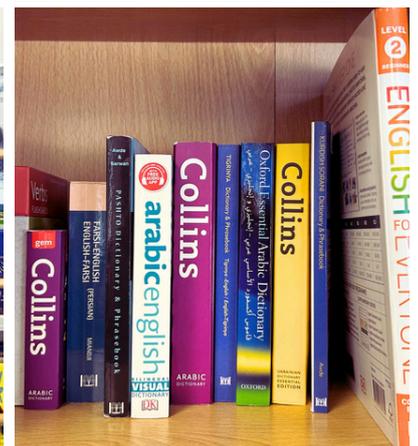
“ One of our Sudanese volunteers told us: “The tablet helps my daughter a lot to study. “Her mobile phone is broken so she can’t use it to do her homework. But with the tablet, it really makes things easier for her with homework as well as to keep in touch with her brothers and friends who are still abroad. “For me, it’s a pleasure to be able to relax and watch movies, to speak with my family and sons who are back home. I can see them on a bigger screen than my phone and it makes me feel closer to them.”

A second wonderful initiative we were able to create through money from Halifax was our mini multi-lingual library. We were able to populate the library with dozens of books, ten of them on the subject of mental health and well-being. Other books explore Irish and British culture while we now have dictionaries covering six languages - Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, Tigrinya, Ukrainian and Kurdish Sorani.

This resource has become a firm favourite in our Social Café area where it encourages people to pick up a book and read.



It is particularly popular among the young attendees at our mums and babies group. The mini-library has enabled our members to improve their language skills, talk openly about their mental health and it has strengthened greatly their cultural knowledge.



# Begin Together 2023 Begin Together 2024



## Women only residential

Twenty members took part in an overnight women-only residential at the Waterfoot Hotel on 15–16 November 2024. The programme combined wellbeing activities with practical workshops on budgeting, credit scores and women's mental health, delivered in partnership with Derry Credit Union. Participants found the experience relaxing and empowering, supporting greater confidence, connection and understanding of financial and mental wellbeing.



## Weekly Social Café

Since November 2023 the Social Café has been a regular feature of NWMF's overall offering, creating a welcoming and inclusive space for migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum. The programme is supported through a combination of funding sources, including contributions from the Bank of Ireland and the National Lottery Community Fund.



The Social Café provides opportunities to practise everyday English and access information through workshops and awareness sessions. With support from staff, volunteers and partner organisations, participants have been supported to reduce isolation, build confidence and develop meaningful social connections.

We also delivered a range of creative, wellbeing and outdoor activities that supported participation, learning and connection.



Museum visits



Yoga sessions



Gallery visits



Trees of Hope workshop



Cooking demonstrations



Art workshops

# Youth Summer Scheme



With the school holidays looming large, registration for our annual Summer Club opened in April 2024.

In the space of just five days, it was fully booked with 50 young people, aged between seven and 15 years, signed up.

We were very lucky to have long-time volunteer Adrian Courcelles Baena on board again as lead co-ordinator, assisted this time by Aoife Greenberg, Caitlin O'Doherty, Molly Harper and a number of other volunteers.

Between them they drew up a busy itinerary which included days out, art workshops, sports and culinary fun, concluding with a two-night stay in Todd's Leap.

As in previous years, the Summer Club was financed through a £150,000 grant from the Co-Op Foundation's Future Communities Fund.



Our Chief Executive, Lilian Seenoi Barr, spoke of her delight that NWMF was in a position to deliver a project that enabled young people to get active, get involved and meet new friends.

“The funding from Future Communities is designed to help young people into leadership positions. By giving them the opportunity to develop our summer of activities, we are enabling them to grow both personally and in terms of their future careers.”



The Summer Club turned out to be a huge success with many parents indicating that their child or children were already asking about signing up for the following year.



# A Fairer Future: Migration Justice Fund – Joint campaign with CAJ

In 2024, we moved to strengthen our long-standing partnership with the Committee on the Administration of Justice through a joint project supported by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The project, led by Shannon Doherty, brings together research, campaigning and strategic policy engagement to challenge racism, intimidation, racial profiling within the Common Travel Area and the wider hostile environment in Northern Ireland.



Through sustained advocacy, we raised concerns with politicians and statutory bodies, sought improved protections for visa nationals and pressed for safeguards against the expansion of immigration controls.

We also contributed to a range of consultations and inquiries, including submissions to the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues and the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee.

The project also continues to provide secretariat support to the All-Party Group on the Minority Ethnic Communities, helping to connect community perspectives with political representatives.



# Advancing Race Equality Awards

Over 250 people gathered in the Ebrington Hotel on March 7 2025 for our annual Advancing Race Equality Awards. Host for the evening was author, lecturer and activist Chantelle Lunt who travelled from England for the event. Trophies were handed out across 11 categories including a Special Recognition Award for Foyle Food Bank in recognition of the service it provides to the local community.

Winner of the Anti-Racism Primary Schools Art Competition was Maisie-Kate Nixon of Long Tower PS while the secondary school trophy went to Georgia Forsythe of Movilla High School in Newtownards.

St Eugene's PS collected the Anti-Racism School of the Year Award while Bronagh Fikri of North West Regional College was named Anti-Racism Teacher of the Year.

Daniel Sanusi, a student at Ulster University, picked up two awards – Young Leader and Advancing Racial Justice and Fairness.

Elsewhere, ACSONI Policy Officer Takura Makoni was revealed as this year's Anti-Racism Leader while the trophy for Community Champion went to Mohammed Idris, owner of Bash Café in Belfast.

The award for Anti-Racism Media went to the Derry News, with Editor Rory Mooney on hand to lift the trophy.

The loudest round of applause however was reserved for Lifetime Achievement Award winner Patricia Byrne, founder of Sole Purpose Productions.



Addressing those gathered, host Chantelle Lunt said that with the rise of far-right protests and anti-migrant agendas, the Advancing Race Equality Awards were more important than ever.

"They shine a much-needed spotlight on those doing incredible work to celebrate diversity, challenge racism and champion race equality," she said.

Among the judges for the evening was Dr Raymond Russell who described the Advancing Race Equality Awards as an opportunity to "come together and celebrate the remarkable work of those who promote racial equality in Northern Ireland".

He said, "By challenging racist attitudes and stereotypes, they are helping to bring about a society where one day all races and creeds in our society will feel comfortable in living and working together."

# Mother and babies sessions

Our Mother and Baby Group continued to go from strength to strength following its launch in January 2024.

It was our privilege to watch the babies and toddlers grow and develop. Over the weeks and months we saw them learn to sit up, walk independently and it was so lovely to witness their little personalities blossom.

There were so many laughs and highlights throughout the year, including a trip to Portrush, outings to the park and Jo Jingles to name but a few.

Even though the mums and children come from all corners of the globe, it was moving to see them respectfully celebrating each other's traditions and learning about each different culture.

It does our hearts good to hear the children and mothers laughing each week and we want to put on record our immense gratitude to Donna, Cheryl, Victoria and others from the Western Trust who continue to provide us with invaluable advice and support.



## English Classes

Three levels of tailored English language classes were delivered at our premises and were open to all community members, with the majority of participants being people seeking asylum and refugees. The programme included:

- Beginner level: two sessions per week (one women-only and one open to all)
- Conversational English: two sessions per week (one women-only and one open to all)
- Intermediate level: one session per week (open to all)



Classes were delivered weekly by a team of four volunteers and one sessional teacher, using a range of resources including teaching and exercise books, videos and interactive language activities. Demand for the classes remains high, reflecting limited availability of free English language provision locally and participant numbers continued to increase over the reporting period.

Closer partnership working with North West Regional College has supported learners to progress into accredited English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision where appropriate.

# Financial Overview

2024 - 2025



## North West Migrant Forum

This report will include the financial overview for the financial year ended 31 March 2025.

### **Statement of Financial Activities - Page 7 of the financial statements:**

The Statement of Financial Activities presents the total income and expenditure for the financial year ended 31 March 2025. The total income has increased by £40,460 - 13% from 31 March 2024. Restricted income has increased from 2024 to 2025 by £22,618, this was due additional funded awarded from Halifax, DCSDC Peace Plus, Radius Housing and Esmee Fairbairn. Unrestricted income has increased by £17,842; this was due to the increase in income from Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.

In the year ended 31 March 2025, expenditure has decreased by £16,307 – 4%. The decrease relates wages and travel costs. See breakdown of expenditure on page 14 of the financial statements.

At the 31 March 2025 the charity had a deficit of £25,058; this was made up of a surplus £27 of restricted funds, and a deficit of £25,085 of restricted funds. Overall balance of reserves - £10,791 – this is made up of restricted reserves balance of £528 and unrestricted reserves - £10,263 carried over to financial period 31 March 2026.

### **Balance Sheet – Page 8 of the financial statements**

The Balance Sheet presents the financial position of the charity at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. The Balance Sheet is made up of:

Tangible fixed assets with a net book value of £4,728 – this is made up of office equipment. Assets are depreciated at 33% annually.

Debtors of £20,679 relate to grant income due at the year-end which have since been received, and prepayment of £253 relating to insurance.

Cash at bank and on hand at 31.03.25 - £84,228.

The company had liabilities of £98,844 at the year ended 31 March 2025. This is made up of accruals - £5,596 and deferred income of £93,248.

Balance sheet total of £10,791 is made up of restricted funds of £528 and unrestricted funds of £10,263.

# Looking Ahead

With geopolitical tensions escalating almost by the day, it is impossible to predict what 2026 will look like in terms of the global narrative.

The ongoing horrors in Gaza, the brutality being visited upon Sudan's civilian population, erratic and provocative statements and actions by Donald Trump, Putin's continued push into Ukraine, China eyeing Taiwan, Iran on the cusp of all-out revolution - rarely have international relations been so strained.

But amid all the uncertainty and all the imbalance remains the single guarantee: Innocent people will continue to pay the price for the actions of their governments.

Here in Ireland and the UK we hear the same question asked ad nauseum: 'Why are all these people coming here?'

Our answer is where do you want them to go? Their homes have been destroyed, their family members killed, their lives uprooted entirely.

To stay in Sudan, Ukraine, Gaza, Eritrea, Myanmar, Yemen, Haiti is likely to spell death, torture persecution, starvation, prison or forced military service.

In our little corner of the world, we will continue to offer a hand up to those cast to the wind through circumstances not of their making.

In 2026 we have so much to look forward to: The ongoing development of our Intercultural Café, our Intercultural Cross-border Inclusion Programme, the return of our family fun day and summer club and of course our annual Cultural Ceilidh.

We'll keep moving forward. We only ask that you stand beside us as we do.

