

Divis Joint Development Committee

Annual Report

2023-2024



Frank Gillen Centre

Mission Statement

“The aim is to provide, develop and enhance core programmes and activities that meet the needs of the local community, which contribute to improving the quality of their lives in a real and meaningful way”.

Cost of Living Crisis

A cost-of-living crisis has continued to impact on individuals, communities and organisations supporting local people. Ongoing financial challenges remain to the front of every organisation’s thoughts and actions, and we are tackling an increased demand for our support.

Ongoing uncertainty created by the lack of a functioning government has had an impact on government support from a central and local government perspective right down to our locality levels and whilst no specific contracts look under threat (at this point in time) delays in issuing agreements are causing difficulties as we continue to deliver much needed (public facing) services.

Increased operating costs across all our areas of responsibility has meant difficulties created for our own staff and volunteers, additionally this also had a detrimental impact on our organisational ability to continuing to support local people. We did however continue our work with Bryson Charitable Group distributing emergency cost of living support under a scheme for those on benefits and with a Belfast City Council for the “working poor”.

We remain committed, within our limitations, to develop coordinated responses within our organisation and across our locality between partners, initially within our direct locality but also in partnership across the West Belfast area.

We endeavoured where possible to act as a direct support and often as a conduit of behalf of others to reach those in need. It should be stated this is an ongoing issue and it is not clear when it will ease in the current climate.

Core Focus

Divis Joint Development Committee focused on 2 main strands of work throughout the year, although this was heavily impacted by covid in terms of type but also numbers involved;

- Programme, activities and services provided directly through the Frank Gillen Centre and through online activity and outreach support (with partners in other facilities, at home or through online contact)
- External contact; development of activity and partnership approaches continued unabated and remained central to the identification and continuity of support for vulnerable people across our community.

Both strands continue to demonstrate the extent of resource that the FGC provided both as a practical resource and as a human resource in the form of development, support and guidance to local and broader organisations to increase their capacity to deliver better quality programmes to local people and increase access for local people to those services, particularly during another difficult year.

Our Main Aims remained;

- To provide, develop and enhance core programmes and activities by the Frank Gillen Centre and its team of staff and volunteers. Practical projects and activities that met the needs of the local community during a cost-of-living crisis, which contribute to supporting vulnerable people and sustaining the quality of their lives in a real and meaningful way.
- To liaise, advise and guide local community organizations in the strategic development of core programmes and activities.
- To develop platforms for discussion and co-ordination between local community activists and groups, sharing information, experience and resources (via the Falls Partnership Initiative, Greater Falls Neighbourhood Partnership and the West Belfast Partnerships Health Group, in which we chair all 3 structures)

Support Aims

DJDC attempted in a difficult and challenging year to adhere to the following 3 support aims:

1. **Facilities, Resources, Investment** – to secure and manage human, physical and financial resources to enable us to achieve our long term aims.

2. **Sustain, and Improve Governance & Organisational Structures** – to ensure effective organisational structures, management and administrative procedures and controls for the efficient operation of Divis Joint Development Committee.
3. **Maintaining and Build Supportive Partnerships** – to maintain support and enhance mutually beneficial relationships with community, statutory, public and private sector organisations as part of collective responses to shared challenges and delivery of local service support.

Core Programmes

Early years and After Schools Programme (reviewed annually)

Children's emotional, social and educational development (via Play Development, 2-year-old programme, Play and Stay and an After Schools project). We delivered a range of in-house support services at the Frank Gillen Centre including social, emotional and practical support.

Youth Development Team

At present we operate both an in-house youth programme and an outreach project that covers key elements of personal development and life skills, employment support, skills development and capacity building. Our Youth programme operates on a nightly basis with some weekend activity both on and off-site, other activity. Young people periodically complete structured training and skills building.

Additionally, GCSE study support (Maths and English) continues to be provided for most of the year with a break over the summer and resumption in September on a one-to-one basis, this is a hybrid approach of both face to face and online support, although the former is more resource intensive it does work better. The timing of the exams and resits do not neatly fit into a financial year and often the results are spread across 2 financial years.

Family support Services

Our family support includes home visitation and one to one support and spans social, emotional, and practical support and we are directly linked to and liaise closely with the Greater Falls Family Support Hub.

Education support service

DJDC's continues to be involved in city wide discussions around the issues pertaining to lifelong learning through Belfast Learning City and through the Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty strand of the Community Planning Partnership and continue to hold the position of co-chair on the Learning City initiative, alongside a BCC senior manager who is responsible for Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty across the Community Planning Partnership..

A strong strategic base for the initiative and activity has, as previously reported, centred on developing Belfast as a Learning City, including practical and governance arrangements which can highlight the value of City partners working together and collectively make a greater impact on wellbeing and reducing life inequalities across the city.

We have been formally included in the membership of UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities since 2018.

We now have a working network and an agreed MOU with Cork, Derry/ Strabane, *Waterford, Limerick and Dublin learning cities who have developed a similar approach in an all-Island network of Learning Cities.

*Waterford came on board as a UNESCO designated member at the tail end of 2023.

Administration and Support Role

We provide additional and free administrative support to DJDC's core projects listed above and to local organisations when required.

We directly support;

- Falls Residents Association
- Immaculata Junior Football Club
- Greater Falls Neighbourhood Partnership (as lead agency)

We continued to act as an umbrella organisation for the processing of the Access NI applications across the West Belfast geographical area for local community and business organisations.

Partnership Development Role

We continue to play an active role in many local networks, this included cooperation and direct collaboration in delivering many local services including;

- **Clan Mor Surestart** (as a service delivery partner and the Chairperson), a programme for 0–4-year-olds and family support.
- The **Heart project** (as Chairperson and active partner) - healthy living centre initiative based in a community health complex, the Maureen Sheehan Centre delivering social prescribing, health education through the Healthwise scheme and direct condition management support in the form of rehab for cancer and stroke patients.
- **Falls Partnership Initiative**, (as a partner and Chairperson of this local collaborative) a local partnership operating throughout the Falls electoral ward area, brought together to promote and develop and implement an area wide growth process.

- **Greater Falls Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership** (as lead agency and Chairperson for this DfC initiative): we continue to work at all levels of the Partnership to implement the key issues and priorities outlined in guiding strategic document.
- We are continuing working with **GP Federations**. This includes being part of the continuing development of the **multi-disciplinary team** attached to GP practices.
- In a chairing role at the West Belfast Partnership Boards Strategic Health Forum, we have developed a Wellbeing Framework for population and place-based planning to improve the quality of life and tackle inequalities. The 'Building Resilience and Embedding Wellbeing' Health framework includes a Wellbeing Charter.
- We have been working to a common approach with both GP Federation and the MDT and Connected Community Care Hub around access to services and are currently working through initiatives to do improve this area of work including a health hub app for West Belfast and a Green Spaces map with Belfast Healthy Cities.
- As part of the **Connected Care Hub**. 4 key link workers are employed throughout the city, the West contact is based at the Maureen Sheehan Centre, and this connects to the dementia navigators and the BHSCT reablement team as well as a range of community deliverers and service providers. We continue to be involved in conversations with the CCC Hub to develop a stronger organisational relationship between them, GP Federations and the West Belfast Health planning approach.

Divis Joint Development Committee has had another very challenging and difficult year and we remained actively involved in facilitating discussions around collaboration between community and statutory providers at several levels locally, citywide and regionally. This period of course was dominated by responses to the cost-of-living crisis but as our work on the West Belfast Health framework continues to demonstrate leading the way to positive recovery and long-term development.

Monitoring and evaluation

Our organisation is subject to both internal and external inspection and review. DJDC has an internal programme of service development and reviews involving all staff, management and volunteers.

Additionally, we are subject to periodic reviews and inspection by a range of statutory organisations including the Education Authority, Department for Communities and the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

Financial Review

The organisation is a charitable organisation.

A significant proportion of wages and salary costs are currently covered by restricted funding, however in the current and prior year some wages and salary costs had to be paid from unrestricted funds. The Management Committee acknowledge the *current* level of free reserves is well below the desired level. The charity continues to seek additional sources of funding and applications for future funding in relation to forthcoming years.