



'Positive mental attitude'
**'There is no such
thing as failure'**

*I learned to start believing in myself...
'I am good enough'*



ROUTE 23
RESILIENCE

**Year 2016-2023
Anniversary**

*More aware of children's
feelings & emotions.*

*Really enjoyed
the training*

*'Great
advice'*

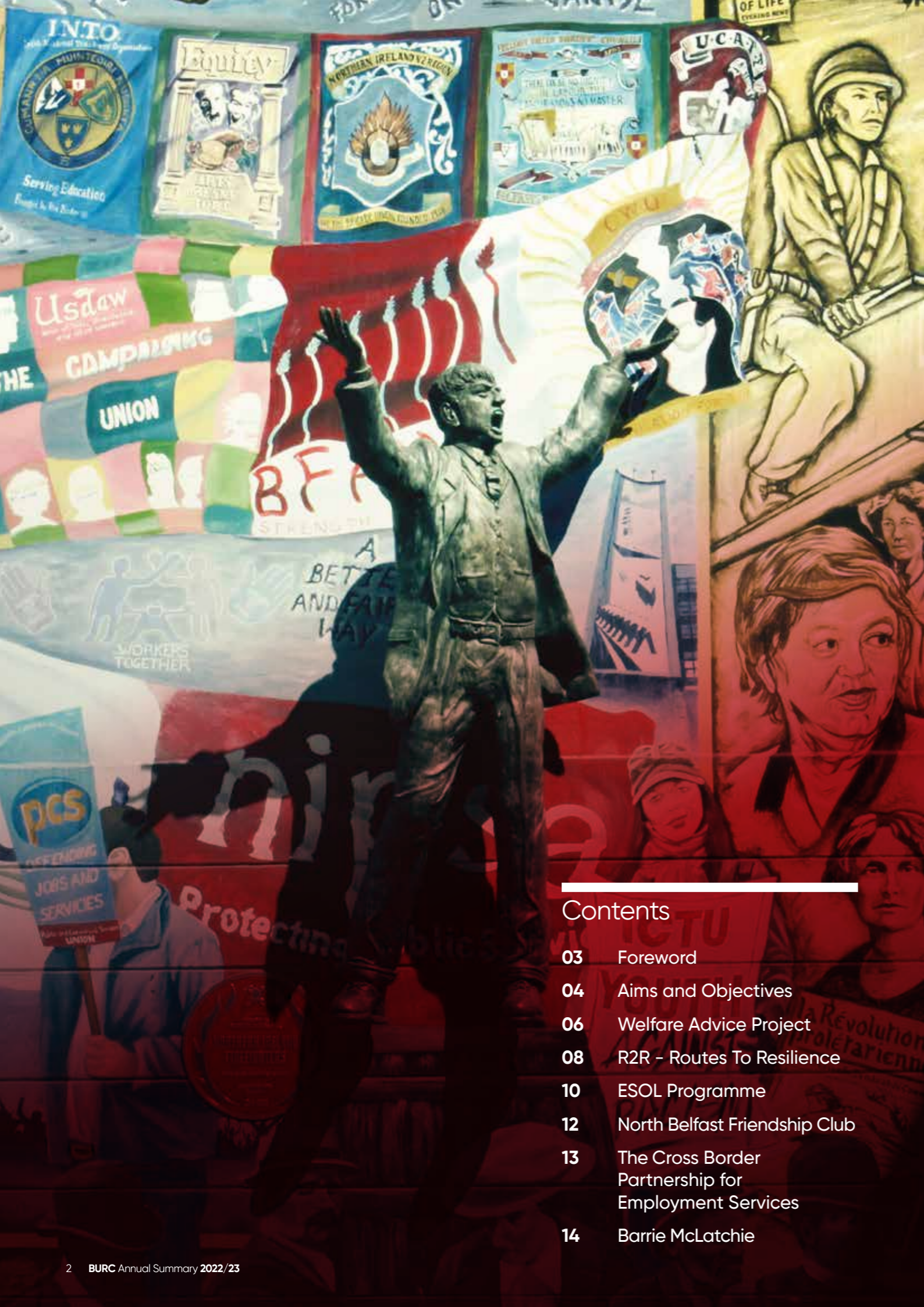
*Learned to
make small
goals daily.*

'Act don't react'

*I learned to watch
what I say to the kids.*

I learned to think before I speak

**Annual
Summary**
2022/23



Another turbulent year was felt by communities dealing with the cost-of-living crisis, which is being felt more keenly in NI, due to the lack of working political institutions.

Stormont is still not up and running, as no solution has been reached on the protocol. The Windsor framework, a post Brexit legal agreement between the EU and the UK, hasn't broken the deadlock, despite it being formally adopted by both parties on 24 March 2023. Decisions on Funding, Health, Education and more are not being made and this is impacting negatively on communities and families' daily lives. The NI Secretary Chirs Heaton Harris continues to negotiate with the DUP to return to Stormont and at the time of writing he is optimistic.

The Education system is facing funding shortages, teacher shortages and the likelihood of more and bigger strikes. Daniel Kebebe from the National Education Union (NEU) predicts more pay disputes in a 'United front' in response to the Prime Minister, Rushi Sunak, threatening to overrule the results of an independent pay review body. The burden of increased energy bills and paying for cover teachers is affecting school funds.

More recently a number of schools have had to close, due to the Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete crisis. Making schools unsafe and the number may increase.

More and more we hear of how the NHS is a breaking point. Wait times in emergency departments are increasing, patients are being kept in Ambulances due to lack of beds. Cancer patients are not being diagnosed in a timely fashion. More than a decade of underfunding has led to the current crisis. NHS staff are striking more, in an attempt to be heard, concerned for the safety of patients and lack of pay increases. The lack of hospital beds is exacerbated, by the lack of care support in the community, where patients who no longer need beds are unable to be allowed home.

The rise in the need for Mental Health supports, particularly for young people, is not being properly funded. Referrals of under 18's to Mental Health crisis teams is three times higher than in 2019.

The number of people seeking asylum in NI has risen over the last number of years. In March 2023, there were 3,030 people receiving asylum support in Northern Ireland. These came from 60 countries. This puts pressure on already strained services and creates need for more focused services, to support effective integration, economically and socially.

A record number of households in Northern Ireland are claiming Universal Credit as people struggle under the impact of the cost of living crisis. Around 147,000 people are currently on Universal Credit in Northern Ireland. (Department for Communities)

People on the lowest incomes, both in and out of work have endured a decade of austerity; with freezes and cuts to social security benefits and in-work supports, undermining resilience and an individual's ability to cope with adversity.

They now find themselves disproportionately affected by the current cost of living crisis; crushing energy bills and faced with the stark choice of going cold or hungry to make ends meet.

DFC began the next phase of Universal Credit (UC) implementation in NI on the 17th April 2023, this involved roughly 500 people in the Andersonstown and Enniskillen Jobs & Benefits office areas who were in receipt of tax credits only and no other benefit. DFC will begin to move those other claimants on legacy benefits onto UC and these people will find themselves needing advice and support. This will mean additional pressures placed on the charities and independent advice centres already stretched to being on the ground to support these individuals.

Policing is facing challenges currently with a large data breach leading to a vote of no confidence in both the Chief and assistant chief constable.

This year Northern Ireland celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, which brought an end to 30 years of violence. A number of conferences, activities and events took place. Time was taken to reflect on the good and meaningful work which has taken place since. Part of the events included the Northern Ireland Investment Summit which was held to attract investment to Northern Ireland. This included an announcement that the professional services firm EY would be creating 1000 jobs in NI over the next five years. The employment landscape of NI is changing with the increase of Tech and it is important that we respond to this need.

Across the world there seems to be more climate events, including fires, floods and Earthquakes. Resulting in people losing their homes and business' and, in some cases, whole communities and towns are being destroyed. The likelihood is that we will be seeing more climate refugees. To borrow a quote "The World is on the move".

On a more personal note, BURC had to say a sad goodbye to an esteemed Colleague. Sadly, our previous Welfare Advice Worker, Barrie Mc Latchie, passed away suddenly. Barrie was passionate about Unions, fighting poverty and standing against oppression. He will be sorely missed.

BURC would like to take this opportunity to thank those who support our work: The National Lottery Community Fund; European funders; Belfast City Council; IFI (International Fund for Ireland) & CBPES (Cross Border Partnership for Employment services) the volunteer's staff and committee for their tireless work and many others who help us create opportunities and resources.

Contents

- 03 Foreword
- 04 Aims and Objectives
- 06 Welfare Advice Project
- 08 R2R - Routes To Resilience
- 10 ESOL Programme
- 12 North Belfast Friendship Club
- 13 The Cross Border Partnership for Employment Services
- 14 Barrie McLatchie

ADVOCATE PEACE BUILDING
 Advice **TRAINING** Conflict Res
 TRAINING
ADVOCATE **ADVICE** Networking
 RESEARCH **REPRESENTATION**
 ADVICE
 Representation **INFORMATION** **NON- RACIS**
 Non- Racist **RESEARCH** **CONFLICT**
 CAMPAIGN
RESOLUTION **NETWORKING**
RESEARCH **CAMPAIGN** **INFORMATION**
NON- SECTARIAN Information
 Campaign
NON- SECTARIAN **NON- RACIST** Training
 Peace Building
CONFLICT RESOLUTION
PEACE BUILDING NETWORKING
 Advocate Non- Sectarian

aims+ Objectives

WHO WE ARE

The Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre (BURC) was set up in September 1984 and the premises were opened in 1985.

The Northern Ireland Trade Union Education & Social Centre (NITU) is a charitable organisation operating as Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre (BURC) whose aims and objectives are to provide support, education/ training and facilities to the unemployed and other groups suffering from social and economic disadvantage.

VISION

NITU/BURC aims to be recognised as an innovative provider in effecting change towards a fair and inclusive society.

PURPOSE

To promote equality, through supporting the participation and inclusion of all individuals, groups and communities.

VALUES

The core values of the organisation are to deliver sustainable activities and services, through a flexible creative approach based on partnership, networking, accountability and leadership.

Welfare Advice Service Highlights 2022-2023

In 2022/23 the demand for advice is still growing, and will continue to grow as the impact of changes to welfare reform continue to take effect.

Reduced household income is leading people who previously would not have required it to seek advice, and the advice that we need to provide is becoming more time-intensive and complex in its nature.

Alongside welfare reforms, the rising costs of household bills and stagnant wages means that for some people, the money they bring in is less than their essential outgoings each month. Helping people manage their money, whether that's maximising their entitlements, dealing with their debts,

not having enough money to maintain adequate accommodation, all of which, can have a devastating impact on people's health and relationships. We know people need different types of support at different times in their life. Our service provides the flexibility to deal with most of the issues our clients come to us with and we tailor our advice to each person's needs, we will provide as much support as needed, empowering clients to regain control of their circumstances.



Outcomes (1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023)

Over the year we dealt with 321 clients, this generated 1367 enquiries/caseloads, on a variety of issues such as benefit claims, debt, education, employment, family, housing, immigration, travel, appeals, mandatory reconsiderations and many more.

We worked with our clients to submit 28 mandatory reconsiderations, from this 19 were won directly as a result of the M/R, 7 of these had to go on to the appeal stage.

From the 34 appeals lodged, 29 were successful for the client, 4 were lost and 1 appeal was withdrawn by the client before it got to the appeal hearing.

145 of these clients were seen face to face, 158 clients were dealt with via telephony and 12 by email.

From this we generated a total of £664,453.08 for our clients which then goes back in to the local economy.

These are some of our top enquiries and casework, UC being the highest, with employment and debt next then housing, health, appeals and mandatory reconsiderations.

Top Enquiries & Casework



Client Satisfaction Feedback Reaction

We endeavour to provide a top class service to everyone who comes through our doors, the only way to do that is to ask the clients what we did right, and what we could do better, here is some responses



"You were so easy to understand and explained it all to me very well. I wouldn't have been able to do it all if you had not been there to help"

"You always give me useful guidance and advice. I am very thankful that I can contact you when I have a problem"

"I had never claimed benefits before, I didn't think I was entitled to anything but after talking to the adviser my circumstances changed for the better, I was awarded the benefits I claimed and this reduced my worry"



Advice NI Membership consists of 69 Independent Advice Centres located throughout NI, this is a network of organisations committed to delivering free, independent, and high-quality advice to those who need it most.



Cliff Edge Coalition NI is made up of over 100 organisations from across Northern Ireland which came together in 2018 to campaign to sustain and strengthen crucial welfare reform mitigations. Campaigning to sustain and strengthen vital welfare reform measures to protect people across NI.



Supported by
Belfast City Council

Funder

We would like to extend our thanks to the **Belfast City Council** for their continued funding, without this support we could not deliver this service within our community.

Case Studies

CASE 1:

Client, male, aged 58, lives alone in HA property, has epilepsy, mental health conditions and could not read or write. He was in receipt of PIP, ESA and Housing Benefit, PIP was stopped after review and client was distraught as this was money he needed to live on. We advised him of his options, and as long as we helped him he was happy to submit a mandatory reconsideration. We did this also providing supporting evidence from his GP, decision remained the same, quoting the client was not getting any specialist support therefore he could manage his health conditions.

This was in 2021, at a time when appointments had been cancelled due to Covid, or very limited appointments. We then lodged the appeal and with the support from Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service the client won his appeal, this resulted in £11,896.53 being backdated and the client will receive £744.25 each month from PIP until May 2026. Client was very happy and this enhances his daily living enormously.

CASE 2:

Client, female, aged 34, had been turned down for ESA (IB) for not attending her ESA health assessment, her support worker made a referral in to us to see if there was anything we could to help the client. She suffers with severe anxiety and was finding everything very overwhelming. At this point the client was stressed about her benefit payments stopping and this was exacerbating her anxiety. This would also mean her housing costs would stop being paid if she lost the ESA award and would create a very difficult situation for the client.

We met with the client and discussed her options, completed a benefit maximisation to ascertain would she be better off making a claim for UC, the client opted for submitting the mandatory reconsideration to ESA. The client had a successful outcome to her ESA mandatory reconsideration and they put her back into the support group component. The client was delighted that she did not have to go appeal.

Routes to Resilience



We are in the final year, of what was a seven-year, National Lottery funded Reaching Out Supporting Families programme. The length of the programme allowed us to make a real impact.

The final two years of the programme was focused on leaving skills within the community. We chose the most popular programmes, from the initial five years and developed Train the Trainer courses from them. The idea being, that that the skills developed can be disseminated through communities after the end of the programme.



Routes to Resilience Train the Trainer

1 Mental Health

- Hydebank Wood Parents group
- Cliftonville Women's Centre
- Migrant Women's group
- Youth Justice agency
- NISA
- Mixed Migrant group

2 Therapeutic Play Training

- Sure Start Staff - Blackie Centre
- Whiterock Children's centre
- Ionad Uibh Eachach
- Cliftonville Women's Centre
- Indian Women's group

3 Community Leadership

- Suffolk Community Group
- The Crew -Rathcoole
- The Hubb Shore Road x 2
- Migrant Help
- Sons of Kai

4 Volunteer Induction & Training

- Falls Women's centre
- Volunteers from 5 various groups



Play Training, for practitioners and parents

Participants are supported through a theoretical and practical journey of the importance of play and play advocacy. The Value and Function of Play; Anxiety, the Nervous System and Play; The Adult's Role in Play; Therapeutic Play skills.



Community Leadership

Engaging and Retaining participants; Exploring Delivery Methods; Process to Agreements; Learning & Action Learning; Active Listening; Sharing a Vision & Pathways to Action.

Volunteer Induction & Training

For teaching English in a community setting. Session Planning; Understanding the Context and Language Learning Needs; material % Resources; Delivery; Elements in a Session; Indicative session plans & ChatGPT for community ESOL.

Mental Health

Provide parents skills for dealing with everyday stresses. Breathing; Meditation; being grounded; Looking at your strengths and support structures around you; Thinking more helpful thoughts; Addressing the critical inner voice; Ways to cultivate inner peace every day; Opens a space for them to share and know others are going through the same difficulties; Building resilience; Learning to say no - so you can say yes to yourself.

Social Innovation Support

Another aspect of the programme was supporting groups it individuals in setting up of furthering their Social Innovation Ideas. We were please to support the following initiatives:

The Cultured Club

The Cultured Club - is dedicated to reviving this lost tradition and bringing the control of our health into our own kitchens. 'Let food be thy medicine and thy medicine be food' is a hard philosophy to live by when we are so removed from the food we eat.

Grace Abosi Sewing

Grace Abosi Sewing - Grace has spent years teaching others sewing skills with a recycle and upcycle focus. Combining this skills training with community inclusion and welcoming people to their new home. Grace wanted to open her own retail outlet with a focus on Community, with a space for people to meet, Share skills and make friends.

Suffolk Community cooperative

Suffolk Community cooperative - Community Kitchen & gardening services. A main aspect of the community co-operative is sustainability, with the Henderson Group and the Co-Op providing surplus food. As well as this, they have their own community garden where they will be growing their own vegetables. They extended their reach to providing gardening services with the purchase of a lawn mower.



The Whitehouse Museum

The whitehouse Museum - The White House has nestled on the Northern Shore of Belfast lough for over 400 years and has now been restored into a beautiful visitor centre and multi purpose space.

The Whitehouse tells the story of the Williamite and Jacobite wars from a European perspective and the story of this Historic buildings past right up to the present day. The centre is currently being run by volunteers and they wish to turn it into a social Enterprise.



ESOL Programme

Empowering adult refugees and asylum seekers in Belfast and beyond by supporting the development of their English Language to support integration and employability.

We provided online classes throughout the year, volunteer tutors, working in different delivery teams, have been instrumental in providing structured 8-week cycles of ESOL at various levels, including:

- ✓ **Absolute Beginners**
- ✓ **Advanced Beginners**
- ✓ **Progressors**
- ✓ **Advanced Progressors**
- ✓ **Conversation**

We are proud to embrace the rich diversity of our community, with adult learners from various Countries, including:

Syria - Brazil - China - Eritrea - Iran - Iraq - Somalia Sudan - Ukraine - Hong Kong - Afghanistan

TEMIRAS (Teaching English for Migrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers)

The ninth presentation of our 10-hour course, offered as part of the University's Open Learning programme, took place in January-February 2023. This course continues to provide a valuable pipeline for volunteers who can contribute to ESOL provision in local communities.

Sector specific & targeted

BURC has successfully provided ESOL courses tailored to individuals working or aspiring to work in sectors and engage with sectors.

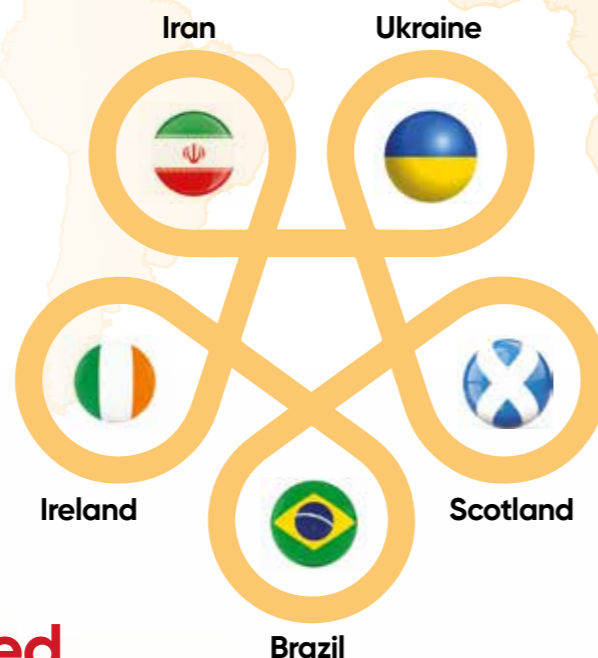


Northern Ireland Refugee Resettlement Scheme (NIRRS)

We secured funding to provide ESOL courses to the last group of Syrian refugees who arrived in Northern Ireland through the NIRRS.

A total of 15 learners successfully completed our classes in March 2023 and were signposted to further ESOL provision in local colleges or community groups. Some learners continue to benefit from our online classes.

One of the positive aspects of online delivery, has been the widening of the range of countries our Learners connect to classes from. In the past year, we have catered for learners based in:



Innovation

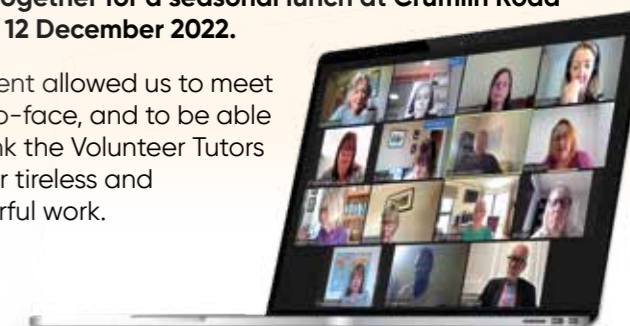
Embracing technology, BURC ESOL has made significant progress in utilizing free and low-cost online tools to streamline coordination among our volunteer delivery teams.

Platforms such as WhatsApp, Volunteer Signup, and Google Drive have facilitated seamless course delivery, enhancing the learning experience for both tutors and learners. Volunteers at BURC ESOL have been exploring the potential of ChatGPT and other forms of artificial intelligence in enhancing learner autonomy, particularly for higher-level learners.

Volunteers

In the spirit of fostering camaraderie and appreciation, a dozen members of the BURC ESOL delivery teams came together for a seasonal lunch at Crumlin Road Jail on 12 December 2022.

The event allowed us to meet face-to-face, and to be able to thank the Volunteer Tutors for their tireless and wonderful work.



Networking

Our team has actively contributed to the policy group set up by the Department of Infrastructure to further develop an ESOL policy that aligns with the needs of Northern Ireland. Insights from a similar policy group at NATECLA have informed our contributions, encompassing past, current, and future ESOL provision in England, Scotland, Wales, and the Island of Ireland.

Our Volunteer Coordinator, Claudia, along with two Volunteer Tutors, presented BURC ESOL's activities at a summit of community groups providing ESOL classes to newcomers. The event, chaired by Arthur McKeown, marked the first of its kind in Belfast and offered valuable networking opportunities for all attendees.

Several members of our team Claudia Belloni & Arthur Mc Keown actively participated in NATECLA conferences, both locally and nationally. Our engagement extended to the IATEFL and ELT Ireland conferences, providing opportunities for learning and networking

May 2023, at the Aisling Hotel in Dublin, Claudia and Arthur conducted two well-attended workshops. Enthusiastic participants from colleges, ETBs, and

English language organizations across Ireland sought insights into our perspectives on using ChatGPT in the provision of ESOL classes. This conference opened doors for potential collaboration with like-minded organizations on the Island of Ireland.

BURC ESOL readily embraced an opportunity to contribute to the development of sessions for single adult residents at a former military base near Braintree in Essex.

Our journey at BURC ESOL has been filled with growth, collaboration, and positive impact, made possible by the dedication of our volunteers, the support of our partners, and the resilience of our learners. We look forward to another year of transformation and progress, and we thank every individual who is part of our mission.

We would like to thank the following for their support and contribution to our ESOL delivery: Belfast City Council; Jean Kelly; Tom Le Seelleur; Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership (NISMP); Northern Ireland Refugee Resettlement Scheme (NIRRS) and the Belfast Trust to deliver and of course our volunteers who tirelessly provide ongoing support to our students.

North Belfast Friendship Club

The friendship club changed venue this year to the Quaker Meeting House, Frederick Street, Belfast.

The new venue is easily accessible and provides a relaxing environment in which to welcome anyone from North Belfast to join us for free tea/ coffee and biscuits. We encourage people to come along, have some conversation, play games, practice English & meet like minded people.



The Cross-border partnership for employment services

The CBPES was established to help make things easier for those who wish to commute daily or weekly across the border to work. It does this by attempting to overcome at least some of the obstacles which people face.



In particular it provides pathways to the information required by people moving across the border, for example, jobseekers that need information on employment and training opportunities on both sides of the border, on taxation and the social security systems.

The Partnership also aims to assist employers by providing them with access to a larger pool of labour i.e. jobseekers living on both sides of the border. Advice is available to employers on a range of cross-border recruitment issues.

The Partnership covers all Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland (Louth, Cavan, Monaghan, Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim).

The Partnership is guided by a Steering Committee of up to 12 members nominated by the Partner Organisations and is supported by a full-time Co-ordinator. There is a network of specialist advisers on cross border issues, who are located in the Partner Organisations.

BURC (Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre) as part of the partnership, provides English language support and job skills training to job seekers, cross border to keep a job, get a job or get a better job.

We have provided online English for Employability Language support to 158 Job seekers

A pilot of English Language for Tourism was undertaken to support the gap in skills for the Hospitality industry.

The project is intended to provide three significant benefits:

Unlocking migrant capabilities, as people developed language skills that will enable them to contribute more to the local community where they live.

Saving costs to public services. Promoting social cohesion.



Barrie McLatchie

Barrie McLatchie was a class act. He was a unique character, full of charm, wit, and commitment.

When he is described to other people it's usually as 'Yes, Barrie the Scottish miner who came to Belfast to organise for the miner's strike and never went home. It was only a beginning. Barrie was born and raised in Ayrshire Scotland, he served his time as a mining engineer in both the coalfields of Ayrshire and the central workshop. He was active in the Co-operative Party and the Labour Party before becoming an officer for the National Union of Miners (NUM) in Edinburgh for whom he was to play a leading role during the 1980's dispute.

Barrie stood in opposition to the communities destroyed and left to the ravages of unemployment, drugs, and poverty, just as he would continue to stand up against injustice for the rest of his life. When he came to Ireland it was to organise solidarity and fundraising for the NUM.

It was during this work he first engaged with the Belfast Unemployed Centre on a scheme to bring miners children to Belfast to stay with families here as rest bite from a dispute that was in its height.

After being made redundant in 1985 he returned to Belfast to stay with friends and his sense of injustice in the face of Thatcherism naturally led him again into the orbit of the Unemployed Centre where he first became a volunteer and then a fulltime Welfare Advisor and Outreach Worker.

This was a role he was to do for 28 years, again a leading role which led him into many other areas and organisations: Over the years he was Chairperson to both the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed and the Organisation of the Unemployed in NI.



He was a Director and Treasurer of the Law Centre and on the Board of Advice NI, he worked on cross border projects for EURES (European Employment Services) and was on the Management Committee of the Association of Independent advice centres.

Throughout that period, he maintained his union membership through the ATGWU (Amalgamated Transport & General Workers Union) which later became Unite. He was consistently involved in campaigns for housing, welfare, jobs, anti-poverty and similar. Always using his position to speak out for the vulnerable, the unemployed and communities in need. Barrie never saw his role as simply a job, it was a vocation and one he was utterly committed to. And in all these groups INOU, EURES, OUNI Barry was universally respected.

Everyone held him and his work in high regard. He will be greatly missed by those of us who worked closely with him, and his spirit and focus will be his legacy in the Centre



BURC YouTube channel

Committee and Staff Members

Committee Members – Northern Ireland Trade Union
Education and Social Centre

Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre.

Mr Joe Bowers – Chairperson
Mr Kevin Doherty – Vice Chair
Mr Brendan Mackin – Secretary
Ms Anne Molloy – Member
Mr Arthur Mc Keown – Member
Ms. Mary Gray – Member
Kerry Fleck – Member

Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre – Staff

Aisling Cartmill – Routes to Resilience Co-ordinator
Adele Moore – Finance Manager
Joanne Farrell – Welfare Advice
Claudia Belloni – Co-ordinator ESOL

Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre

4–6 Donegall Street Place,
Belfast, BT1 2FN,
Northern Ireland.

E: info@burc.org

T: +44(0)28 90961111

www.burc.org

Access Skills Ireland

Foxhall, New Mills, Letterkenny
Co. Donegal, F92 KP7

E: accessskills@burc.org

T: 028 9099 61111

Access Skills Northern Ireland

4–6 Donegall Street Place,
Belfast, BT1 2FN,
Northern Ireland.

E: accessskills@burc.org

T: 028 9099 61111

www.accessskills.org

