

A COMING OF AGE



THE SHARED LEGACY OF COMMUNITY ARTS FORUM
AND NEW BELFAST COMMUNITY ARTS INITIATIVE

About this publication

This publication offers an insight into the context, development and formation of the Community Arts Partnership, the newly merged re-organisation of Community Arts Forum and New Belfast Community Arts Initiative.

Published by New Belfast Community Arts Initiative, as Community Arts Partnership, 3-5 Commercial Court Belfast BT1 2NB
www.comartspartner.org | 028 9092 3493

This publication was facilitated, written and edited by
Heather Floyd, Caragh O'Donnell, Ryan O'Reilly,
Lucy Cochrane and Conor Shields.

Design: Ryan O'Reilly | www.rinky.org



Supported by
The National Lottery[®]
through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland



AN ROINN GNOTHAI EACHTRACHA
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Community Relations Council



ISBN 978-0-9561360-5-3

This publication has received support from the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council which aims to promote a pluralist society characterised by equity, respect for diversity, and recognition of interdependence. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Council or other Organisations shown.

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Foreword

“Community art is a process of harnessing the transformative power of original artistic expression and producing a range of outcomes: social, cultural and environmental. Looked at politically, socially, culturally and/or economically, community arts aim to establish and maximise inclusive ways of working, providing an opportunity for communities and their participants to continue to find ways to develop their own skills as artists and for artists to explore ways of transferring those skills. Through this process, community arts aim to maximise the access, participation, authorship and ownership in collective arts practice.”¹

Above, is the agreed definition of community arts by those who worked with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in 2006 to develop a community arts strategy and to my mind, is as thorough and robust a definition as I’ve seen. The intrinsic value supports the instrumental value, with artists central to this process. In other words, art for art’s sake is the foundation for arts that have an additional benefit.

The insistence on the originality of the art produced is central to community arts practice. This publication may note some of the tensions between that practice and other disciplines, but the essential interrelationship remains. Community arts cannot grow and flourish in a vacuum. Neither will other sections of the arts fulfil their potential without community access and participation.

Art is a continuum; a great sweep of skill/vision, expression/innovation, reflection/inspiration and contention/communication. It mirrors the best of life and can shine a light on the worst. The arts can transform lives and the power to transform is central to a progressive view of the world where social development recognises that the conceptual mind is the highest, most conscious human faculty.

The Community Arts Forum (CAF) central tenets of access, participation, authorship and ownership flow from the rights contained within the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and indeed later conventions, which state that:

“Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits”²

“Cultural diversity is made manifest not only through the varied ways in which the cultural heritage of humanity is expressed, augmented and transmitted through the variety of cultural expressions, but also through diverse modes of artistic creation, production, dissemination, distribution and enjoyment, whatever the means and technologies used.”³

¹ Arts Council of Northern Ireland Community Arts Strategy 2006 ² Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 27

³ Article 4.1 - Definitions United Nations Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005

In helping define and subsequently refine artistic and cultural rights locally, champions like CAF and New Belfast Community Arts Initiative (New Belfast) have supported a two-fold approach to arts development.

Firstly supporting access and participation by seeking to affect policy through advocacy and leadership and secondly, promoting authorship and ownership through the active engagement in projects and programmes. This bi-lateral approach will help guide the new Community Arts Partnership, blending the strengths of CAF's information, promotion and advocacy with New Belfast's range of project processes and workshop programmes.

The newly merged re-organisation will continue to offer a platform for policy consultation and development, whilst at the same time, develop new creative opportunities for artists, communities and individuals in collective processes and community arts practice. We will initiate, we will advocate, we will strive to fulfil our new mission: To take the lead in the promotion, development and delivery of community arts practice, to affect positive change.

Plans are already afoot for two new pieces of research locally, focusing on rural communities and older people. We are developing two international partnerships with artist groups and academic institutions and seeking to make connections from Cork to Kaunas, Derry to Rotterdam, Belfast to Berlin, to name a few. At the same time we will maintain our commitment to providing a high quality workshop and training programme locally. We are

programming projects in over 20 school and 60 community settings and providing over 80 artist assignments during the year ahead.

Community Arts Partnership will continue to co-chair and host policy forums (e.g. The Arts Policy Forum via NICVA and the Minority Ethnic Arts Forum) and build upon the legacy of the Community Arts Forum and New Belfast Community Arts Initiative. We will maintain and grow strategic partnerships with groups, organisations and funders. We will work closely with our principal funder, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, to develop the recognition, vitality and sustainability of community arts.

So, this is not an end nor a beginning but another stage in the local, national and international development of community arts.



CONOR SHIELDS

Director, Community Arts Partnership

Foreword: Arts Council of Northern Ireland

Everyone has the right to create art and share the result. Community arts practice seeks to maximise access, participation and ownership of the arts in a collective manner and, in doing so, it helps transform both individuals and communities. In short, community arts delivers both valuable personal and social outcomes as well as wonderful arts experiences.

The Arts Council recognises that positive, transformative power and is a proud and longstanding supporter of such work in local communities and in communities of interest. The arts are the most powerful tools we have to express who we are and what we value, as individuals and as communities. They offer us the perfect means to explore our worlds and define ourselves, as well as engaging with other people from different cultures and backgrounds. Public funding for the arts remains as important as ever: this is just as true in times of economic crisis because a society which ignores the untapped creative potential of all its citizens is an impoverished one and runs the risk of stagnation. Community arts practice challenges convention and reminds us that indisputable fact.

Community arts practice in Northern Ireland has enjoyed an internationally acclaimed reputation. There can be no doubt that the establishment of the Community Arts Forum (CAF) in 1993, followed

by the creation of New Belfast Community Arts Initiative in 2000 stimulated greater connectivity and growth across the sector. These organisations have been at the forefront of delivering change, actively promoting arts participation within many of our most socially and economically deprived communities and they are to be commended.

With the formation of the Community Arts Partnership, we now enter the next phase of this work. Building on the strengths of both CAF and New Belfast, Community Arts Partnership will be a model for best practice throughout these islands, leading the way in stimulating quality collaborative and participatory arts practice. Supported by the Arts Council, it will host arts workshops in our communities, provide advocacy support, undertake research and offer positive opportunities with which the sector can engage, communicate, share experiences and learning resources. And by doing all of this, it helps government deliver on some of its core objectives, namely; promoting social inclusion, building skills, creating employment opportunities and contributing to community regeneration



ROISÍN MCDONOUGH

Chief Executive, Arts Council of Northern Ireland

Introduction

Having served on the board of New Belfast Community Arts Initiative for many years, I have always really enjoyed working in this unique sector of the arts. I would like to pay tribute to the hard work of the New Belfast staff, not just in relation to the recent merger, but to the consistent project development and delivery over the last eleven years. I'd like to congratulate all the thousands who took part in projects and to thank all the hundreds of artists, poets, facilitators and volunteers who supported those projects. Well done.

There are many challenges facing the arts sector and our local community and voluntary sector and in recent times, given the current economic outlook, much has been made of the potential for collaborations, partnerships and mergers. Trustees of both CAF and New Belfast quickly recognised that to save services that had taken years to develop and to support the widest interest of the community and voluntary sector, a merger was the best option.

It is testament to our collective commitment to this merger process that both sets of serving board members have now joined together to form a new board. We have developed a new strategy together and are optimistic for the future, not only for this re-organisation, but for the benefits it can bring to the wider community.

JOE MCVEY

Chair, Community Arts Partnership

Community Arts Forum (CAF) was the pre-eminent support, advocacy and lobbying body for community arts in Northern Ireland and as the last chair of the organisation I would like to commend the dedication and commitment of the CAF team and the achievements of community arts across Northern Ireland over the last 18 years.

I am delighted to be continuing my support of the newly merged CAF and New Belfast Community Arts Initiative. Community Arts Partnership will bind all the essential elements of community and arts practice to create a visionary, inclusive and challenging space in which communities will be empowered to enjoy, express themselves and create the social change that they need through the arts.

This publication is a significant milestone which very importantly archives some of the amazing community arts projects and events over the years but also looks forward to the exciting work ahead which will be critical to communities, particularly through the current political and economic climate.

KAREN MCFARLANE

Vice-Chair, Community Arts Partnership



COMMUNITY ARTS ORIGINS



Members and friends of CAF at the Long Gallery event at Stormont in 1999.

Origins of community arts

The 1960s could be regarded as the beginning of the community arts movement in the UK. The original momentum for community arts grew out of a radical movement in the 1960s when pioneering artists sought participation for everyone. Changes to legislation resulted in improved access to education and subsequently the arts landscape was growing considerably.

*"In order to understand how remarkable current community arts developments are, they have to be placed in the context of what went before. It is important that we appreciate and know that productions of the arts worked in an entirely different way for probably three hundred years before community arts emerged in its various guises across the world in the 1960s. In that three-hundred-year period, the production of what we call the 'professional arts' was carried out almost exclusively by people from 'educated' and materially well-off backgrounds. It was also - and this is just as crucial - watched and consumed by, that is, its audience was, the same social bracket of people."*¹

MARTIN LYNCH

In Ireland the formation of a community arts movement took slightly longer. Community theatre groups slowly began to emerge north and south of the border in the 1970s. Several community arts groupings came together such as Media Workshop, a visual arts

group. A group from Turf Lodge set up the locally-based Fellowship Community Theatre and Neighbourhood Open Workshops, based in south Belfast, was established. Another such group, Northern Visions, was formed in 1972 and is still going strong.

"In the seventies and eighties there wasn't a lot. People here were still preoccupied with staying alive, with getting through the Troubles. It was only people like myself, Dessie Wilson and Dave and Marilyn Hyndman doing stuff about the arts in communities. Everybody else was either directly involved in politics and nothing else or staying in the house. The city centre closed down at six o'clock at night ..."

MARTIN LYNCH

In 1983 a meeting took place in Dublin's North Star Hotel to formally discuss community arts – the first time a meeting of this type had ever happened in Ireland. It attracted representatives from 15 organisations, based across the island, most of whom were involved in theatre. This group united into what would become CAFE (Creative Activity for Everyone) and later Create.

This meeting was followed by the first Irish community arts conference in 1984. At this stage, it was envisaged that CAFE might be an all Ireland organisation but, as Martin Lynch wrote in *An Outburst of Frankness*:

¹ *The History of community arts in Northern Ireland, An Outburst of Frankness, 2004 edited by Sandy Fitzgerald.*

"There simply wasn't enough of what we understand as community arts activity in the north to sustain a supporting network organisation. But it planted the seed."

The 1980s were a very active period and saw the formation of key community arts organisations which are still active today: Belfast Exposed (1983); Belfast Community Circus (1985); the North West Musicians Collective, which later became the Nerve Centre (1987), Féile an Phobail (1988) and the staging of the first ever large scale community play *The Stone Chair* (1989). The early 1990s saw the formation of other key and still existing organisations such as the Verbal Arts Centre in Derry (1992).

Formation of CAF

By the early 1990s community theatre was finding a foothold in Northern Ireland. Groups such as the Playhouse in Derry, Ballybeen community theatre group in east Belfast and Tongue 'n Cheek community theatre group in Ardoyne had developed following the success of *The Stone Chair*, Belfast's first large scale community theatre production.

The Community Arts Forum (CAF) was originally created by a group of community theatre activists who gathered in the Golden Thread Theatre in January 1993 to discuss ways of working together.

The meeting was intended to forge links and to allow the pooling of resources and expertise. As the day progressed the idea for a broader organisation, namely the Community Arts Forum, gradually emerged. Attendees decided that an organisation which could lobby for community arts would benefit Northern Ireland. Over the rest of its lifespan, CAF lobbied vigorously for community arts.

Playwright Martin Lynch, who was present at that meeting and subsequently became the first chair and later CAF's first director, recalled how the concept of CAF took shape:

"We held that initial meeting in the Golden Thread because groups were looking to perform together and establish a coordinating body through which they could share resources. However, as the afternoon progressed and we discussed things more, someone - I think it was Paddy McCoe - suggested the name Community Arts Forum. I remember being struck by that. This suited me because I wanted to form something more than a community theatre group. Also, the words "community" and "forum" were given equal significance to the word "arts", which was important as we realised we would have a job trying to raise consciousness about arts in disadvantaged communities."

Equipped with a name and laudable goal, the fledgling CAF had to establish itself in a world preceding Peace funding and lottery grants. Finding premises remained a priority until CAF, with help from the Arts Council, was able to secure tenancy in its first offices on Academy Street.

Early days at CAF 1994 -1997

Sandy Hutchinson and Martin Lynch moved into the new CAF offices in April 1994 and with the support of Tony McCusker, then chief executive of Making Belfast Work, managed to secure enough funding to get CAF off the ground:

"Myself and Sandy Hutchinson were appointed as two part-time coordinating development officers and I went out and started looking for money... the first organisation who responded was Making Belfast Work. Making Belfast Work also had the remit to cut across all the red tape of council and regional government. Their job was to get money into the communities as quickly as possible with as little red tape as possible and they were good at it. Tony McCusker was the best. He got community arts straight away and gave us £18,000 and Sandy and I were both able to start the following week on a part time wage. It wasn't very much, but it got us started, we were able to open the office, pay the rent for the office, buy some furniture, get telephones installed get the whole operation going."

MARTIN LYNCH

"In the early days just achieving that physical space, creating a staff team and having a structure was a fundamental part of the growth of the organisation. That sense of solidarity, doing something against the odds sums up what was important about CAF."

DAVID BOYD



Top: Martin Lynch, founder of CAF. Below: David Boyd founder and director of the Beat Initiative



Kate Muldoon

After a short period of time Kate Muldoon was appointed as bookkeeper, followed by Patrick McCoe as development worker.

"It has been my pleasure over the past 18 years to serve the community arts sector. I'm left with many a happy memory from the early days in the office in Academy Street to our beautiful premises in Church Street. I have witnessed at first hand the changes community arts has made to individuals, groups and communities and I have loved every minute of it. CAF's ethos has been that there is an art form inside every person and it should be nurtured and developed. This has been my personal experience as I have acquired many arts related skills which I believe were lying dormant. This would not have happened but for community arts."

KATE MULDOON

Patricia McLoughlin also came on board as cleaner and stayed until the organisation closed. The immediate priority was to get everyone who worked in community arts throughout Northern Ireland to join CAF. Some groups were understandably cautious about CAF, not knowing exactly what CAF was, what it did or how sound the idea behind the organisation was, but soon attitudes started to change.

Martin attributed the early apprehension towards CAF to the groundbreaking nature of the organisation:

"What was new about CAF was the fact that we named community arts in a way that it had not been named before. There was a group called Neighbourhood Open Workshops providing arts in the community, but

they never referred to it as community arts. The term wasn't new it went back to the sixties in the UK but we were the first here to set out and say, 'We are going to call this community arts and we are going to try and get everyone to identify with it.'"

It was a struggle. Some groups working in the community did not necessarily see themselves as a community arts body and thought that adopting the term would make them appear like an amateurish organisation. Others looked upon CAF unfavourably because it was such a robust campaigning organisation. But the vast majority of people began to understand what CAF was doing and came on-board.

"Often if you go into a community and say that we're doing an arts project, people would go 'Ah, I'm not getting involved. That's arty farty shite.' But the term community arts somehow or another, sort of softened it up. Others wanted to drop the term community arts and I was very insistent that we should keep it and that we should use it as the ramp or the route into communities, to open them up."

MARTIN LYNCH

"Belfast Community Circus School was about using circus as a way of empowering young people, connecting with communities, and the sort of personal development that comes about through engagement with the arts. So when I first heard about CAF I thought, 'right, we need to be part of this,' so I went down to meet with Martin and Paddy McCoe just to

find out what they were about and it struck me, when I did meet them, that it was a perfect kind of match, and that the circus school should be part of any movement that is seeking to bring arts into communities and bring communities to arts."

WILL CHAMBERLAIN

"In the years around the time that CAF was being formed and developed, I wanted to do more arts work with young people and set up a youth arts project in east Belfast. Around 1993 we got the use of the YMCA building which became the Beat Initiative. It must have been fairly soon after that I became aware of CAF. I would have come across Martin Lynch and others through the wider carnival arts work."

DAVID BOYD

"From the beginning we were clear that CAF was not just a coordinating organisation. We set out to be a campaigning body because we felt that there was an injustice in arts funding and in access to the arts in Northern Ireland. We felt that historically there had never really been any significant money put into communities of disadvantage and that arts provision tended to be elitist. There was a notion that you had to be born extremely talented and have a good education in order to become an artist or writer. CAF rejected that. We felt that people born in Ardoyne, Sandy Row and Rathcoole could be as innately talented, but would never see the realisation of this talent because society would not allow them."

MARTIN LYNCH

This commitment to access for all and arts for all came to typify the work of CAF. Quite simply, CAF believed that everyone had the innate ability and the fundamental right to engage in arts activity. While CAF recognised the potential of community arts as a driver of social development, it also stressed the importance of art for arts sake. It was vital that people had the opportunity to see themselves as creative individuals.

"I think community arts creates a safe space very quickly which other interventions don't necessarily do. It shortcuts that process where people feel comfortable with each other and I think as well if you are focusing on doing something, like producing a book, a play, a mural or a mosaic, it creates a can-do atmosphere and mutual cooperation."

HEATHER FLOYD

For Martin the arrival of CAF was not due to the efforts of a small number of people or because of some isolated, self contained stroke of luck. Rather CAF's creation was merely part of a wider movement in society.

"The emergence of CAF was not an accident and the organisation did not come about because of the work of one or two people. CAF was a product of its time. It couldn't have happened 20 years before, it certainly couldn't have come about fifty years ago – it's an accumulation of a change in society's behaviour and that is that the arts were becoming more acceptable in areas that previously they were not accepted – that is working class areas and areas with high levels of social deprivation."

MARTIN LYNCH

The first Community Arts Newsletter

In the early days of CAF it was only natural to begin to disseminate information to members and kindred organisations. Known variously as the Wee CAN and the CAN, this publication was a constant CAF output from its first appearance in November 1994. The editorial in issue number two stated boldly:

*"At last the Community Arts Movement in Northern Ireland has its own magazine and its own voice...If the CAN doesn't reflect the phenomenal range of activities that are happening out there, then we will have failed."*¹

It is hoped that the CAN achieved this ambition. Many issues were covered from the emergence of the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL) to community arts across the globe; from the role of community arts in responding to sectarianism and racism to the 'f' word...funding. There were also several CANs dedicated to specific art forms such as community theatre, digital community arts and community music.

The CAN provided a useful and positive means of reflecting on the community arts sector. It recorded and documented the work of the sector over a 16 year period. It promoted community arts and showcased hundreds of community arts projects over the years,

¹ Issue two of the CAN, 1995

providing community arts groups with much needed free and high profile publicity. The CAN is a historical document reflecting a myriad of community arts projects and the external environment community arts was taking place in which changed radically between 1994 and 2011. The last CAN was produced in spring 2011, in total 43 were published in various formats and with many different layouts.

The CAN archive is an important testament to innovative, challenging, cutting edge, creative community arts which took place in Northern Ireland between 1994-2011.

Establishing a lobbying role

In the early 1990s, reflecting what was happening in communities, there was a growing conviction that new ways to engage in arts policy were required. Phrases like “the new constituency”², were used when referring to arts funding policy, focusing on creativity and access by the young, older people, people with disabilities and the community at large. But this still fell some way short of the level of engagement that CAF had envisaged.

Since its inception, CAF lobbied to raise the profile of community arts and to press for increased resources for the community arts sector. On occasion, this involved lobbying for the wider arts sector to increase the amount of money available for arts in the region and

then to lobby around the distribution of those resources. CAF took its policy lead from the UN declaration, firmly putting community arts on a rights agenda:

*“Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.”*³

In those early days, the main focus for CAF’s lobbying was the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI), the principal arts funder. The reasoning was that most ACNI funding at that time went to support mainstream arts activity, with very much less being directed to the community arts sector.

“So we built up a campaign over the next two or three years, that was pretty relentless. I never let go... demand that the Arts Council recognised community arts, demand that the city council recognised community arts and demand that all the funders recognise community arts and that there was an injustice at the moment because the people in those communities weren’t getting any resources or funds.”

MARTIN LYNCH

In its strategy *To The Millennium* the Arts Council responded with its commitment to a proactive approach to community arts. It also extended the Artist in Community scheme to “draw more fully on the often unacknowledged base of artistic and organisational talent that is present in the local community.”⁴ CAF lobbied for more.

² Clive Priestly, *Structures and arrangements for funding the arts in Northern Ireland: Report to Jeremy Hanley MP, Minister with responsibility for the Arts, 1992*

³ Article 27, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* ⁴ *To the Millennium*, Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Belfast 1995

However, at one meeting, the chief executive of ACNI famously referred to community arts as “social engineering”. Needless to say, this comment did not go down well with community arts representatives present!

Whilst community arts benefitted from the introduction of the Arts Lottery in May of 1995, CAF lobbied for an increase in the Annual Support for Organisations Programme (ASOP) clients coming from community arts, as key to the sustainability of community arts practice.

With the advent of a Labour government in 1997 came a stream of government directives, one after the other, in precisely the policy areas that CAF had been lobbying.

“We came up with these terms: access, participation, authorship and ownership as a way of defining what community arts is and convincing everybody, just constantly lobbying. Now I have to say that we were fortuitous in that our campaign coincided with the Labour Party coming in. And that was a great help because the very things we were saying for five years previous to that, Tony Blair, and the Department of Culture in London and Belfast, started sending these dictats to the Arts Council that was the same as what we wanted. Ah, it was just fantastic.”

MARTIN LYNCH

The Access to the Arts Lottery programme was launched in 1997 and, as its title implies, had the principle aim of contributing to the growth of the arts in communities in areas of high deprivation.

“There was a lot of raw passion around in those days, as well, I think.

There was a long way to go at that point to get anything like the recognition that community arts now has, if anyone was going to be shouting the odds it would have been Martin Lynch and Dave Hyndman. So to an extent, they were quite inspirational just in the way that they approached issues and the fact that they didn't kowtow and bow and scrape when faced with the powers that be, and rightly or wrongly I took a certain lead from that behaviour. I think that it was a symbol of the confidence that the leadership of community arts, such as it is, needed at that time – it needed to be banging on the door because it wasn't going to get let in otherwise, you know there needed a certain level of assertiveness that those two brought.”

WILL CHAMBERLAIN

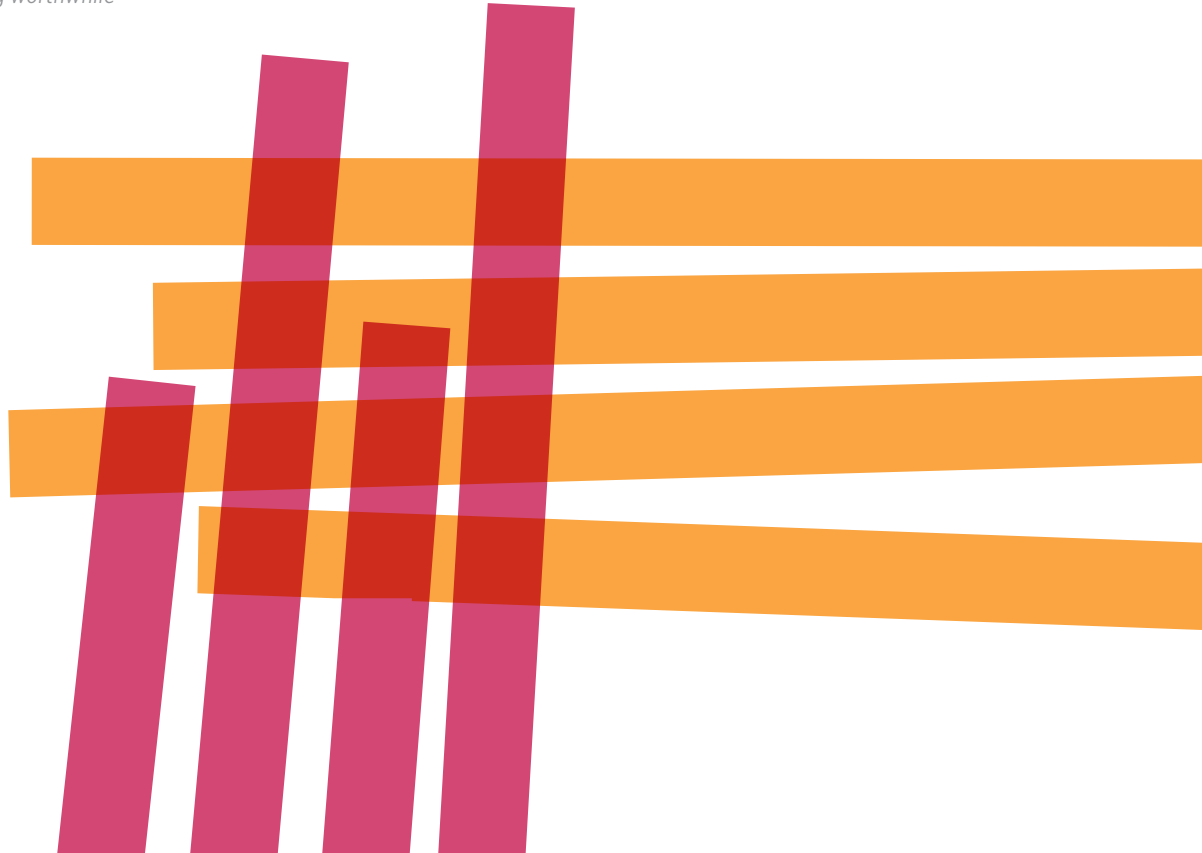
CAF argued consistently, throughout its 18 year existence, that community arts should receive a larger share of funding through the Arts Council's core funding programme. Successful ASOP revenue funding represented more than money, it meant recognition.

“I would say CAF has acted as an advocate for the wider community arts sector. It's been able to talk to policy makers, government, statutory bodies about what community arts does, as well as the achievements of community arts. It's been able to make that intervention at government and policy levels.”

HEATHER FLOYD

"The sector has developed hugely since those early days so it was refreshing and inspiring to meet a group of people who had a similar ethos. We were all pioneering and there wasn't an established model to follow. Everybody was doing something fresh and exciting with a strong sense of commitment and determination. In terms of resourcing the work and funding, it was a big uphill task to get recognition and there was a real sense of solidarity and doing something worthwhile"

DAVID BOYD





The CAF team at their new premises in Church Street.



1998 - 1999

New staff and a new building

After four years existing with two part-time workers, CAF appointed three full time staff and moved into its brand new offices at Church Street. The larger premises made an enormous difference to the delivery of services offered to CAF members.

Vital Signs

In 1998 Comedia published one of the most significant pieces of research on the community arts sector in Belfast, *Vital Signs*. The publication was a baseline study of the community arts sector in Belfast focusing on projects supported by the city's urban regeneration agency, Making Belfast Work, who commissioned the report. This research made a clear case for the long term benefits of arts participation across a number of areas including community development and regeneration, cultural understanding, attending an arts event, and personal development (93% of respondents reported improved confidence). Other findings illustrated that 65% of participants in community arts projects wished to engage in future community projects.

CAF Start Up Programme

In 1998 CAF received funding from Belfast City Council to run a programme called the start up training and workshop programme. This programme was aimed at creating access to the arts for community groups and individuals across the city targeting those who did not normally have access. It ran in various guises, until 2008.

During this period, the start up training and workshop programme created access to the arts for hundreds of community groups and thousands of participants. It ran across Belfast and was replicated over the years in rural Armagh and with special interest groups such as Irish language and older people.

"The project itself seemed to work very well, people knew about it, applied and obviously it was the very first step to engaging with artists. Communities could just buy in an artist to work with them on something and see where that would lead."

PAULINE HADAWAY

The start up training and workshop programme suited community groups as they could work in any art form, use it to suit the needs and aims of the group and deliver it at times to suit the group. The



Vital Signs

Mapping community arts in Belfast

François Matarasso



Politicians at the Long Gallery event at Stormont in 1999

programme was initially for 12 hours. After evaluation it was increased to a 20 hour programme and rebranded 'start with art'. This new programme worked with fewer groups, aiming for a deeper level of contact with groups and more sustainability. While groups were delivering the programme, the development officer worked with them to integrate arts programmes within overall programming.

"Everyone was talking about training at the time, it all seemed to make sense, but often that wasn't what it was about and so I think that the programme actually struggled to break out of the boundaries that were placed on it often."

PAULINE HADAWAY

Between 1998 and 2008, the community arts sector changed considerably. During that period, delivery organisations grew and CAF recognised the need to work more strategically with community groups. CAF moved away from delivering community arts workshops as it was duplicating the work of members. CAF also sensed that the most strategic way to work with community groups would be to research the impact of the work which could be used as a lobbying tool, ultimately resulting in a higher level of funding for community arts.

Lobbying event at Stormont

In May 1999 CAF and other members of the community arts sector held a lobbying event in the Long Gallery at Stormont. The event comprised of a presentation of facts about the community arts sector followed by a staged sketch starring numerous community arts activists. The event was attended by 24 assembly members and party officials representing a cross section of political parties.

The first major community arts conference

In June 1999 CAF in partnership with the Belfast Community Arts Co-ordinating Group delivered the first major conference on community arts and 193 delegates attended. The conference aimed to inform, provoke and promote cross-sector dialogue around the impact community arts has in the physical, mental, social and cultural well-being of local communities. It also presented an opportunity to bring a major arts conference to Belfast, putting the city on the map as an important centre for community arts innovation and development. This was an important development early on in the peace process. Bill Cleveland, a leading community arts practitioner in the USA was a key speaker. There was also a social evening in St. George's market which 248 people attended.

Community arts directory

In September 1999, now equipped with information officer Joan Reid, CAF produced its first community arts directory – *Where do you get hold of them's?* Its strap line was 'A comprehensive information guide to everything you wanted to know about community arts in Northern Ireland but you're too busy with the kids!'

The directory contained over 1500 entries relating to activities, venues and resources for community arts. Separate sections were compiled for special interest groups, such as youth arts and disability arts. It also included a comprehensive funding guide.

A second edition of the directory was published in December 2001 Will Chamberlain wrote in the foreword:

*"So much has happened in the field of community arts over the past few years that producing this new edition has not just been a case of making a few minor adjustments, more of completely rewriting the directory"*¹

The directory provided a comprehensive picture of community arts across Northern Ireland at that time. It was decided after the publication of the second edition that subsequent directories should be produced online.

The Wedding Community Play

Whilst not a CAF project, the Wedding Community Play was performed in Belfast in November 1999 and marked the largest and most ambitious community drama project ever attempted in Northern Ireland. It centred on the fictional marriage of Damian, a catholic, and Nicola, a protestant, against the backdrop the Good Friday Agreement. The play took audiences into private houses inside catholic and protestant estates, then on to a public venue for the performance of a cross-community wedding.

*"In 1999 I undertook an epic journey as a contributor to The Wedding Community Play Project in Belfast. This was a metaphoric and literal journey undertaken by 150 community participants (ranging in age from ten to sixty-five), a number of professional arts workers, an audience of 700 and a very much wider audience who read about the project in their newspapers, saw extracts on television programmes and at conferences and heard about it from their friends. Its production style ensured that no two people travelled exactly the same theatrical journey; its confrontational genesis ensured that no two versions of its history completely agree."*²

"Previous to the 1994 ceasefires, communities were entrenched within their own boundaries. Peace was now blurring those boundaries. Before the Good Friday Agreement, community theatre participants had expressed discomfort in participating in a large-scale cross community project as it might have been perceived that they were speaking for the larger community and representing alliances that weren't publicly

¹ Will Chamberlain, former chair of CAF and director of Belfast Community Circus; Foreword, *Where do you get hold of them's?* 2001

² Gerri Moriarty, community artist and arts consultant; Writing and Publications from www.gerrimoriarty.com

acknowledged. The *Wedding Play* reflected a growing sense of freedom for community participants to engage in the process without incurring bad feeling. Nevertheless this growing confidence marked a change for community arts provision as many community arts projects were successful precisely because they had taken place in well defined communities. People were now leaving their own communities to shop and socialise. Communities were no longer tied into neat little parcels. Community arts practice and delivery would need to refocus to cope with changing social practice."

JO EGAN

"The *Wedding Community Play* would have been a particularly influential one in my mind in terms of, not just as a landmark for community arts in Northern Ireland, but also, personally speaking, it really brought together so many different elements and aspirations of community arts. It demonstrated a quality of thinking and it was aspirational in just the staging of it – it was complex, it was detailed, layered, it addressed social problems. It also addressed issues of sectarianism, and because of the locations being in people's houses there was no escape from the subject matter and – not in any kind of a threatening way, but it was a theatre experience that was so different from everything else, in terms of you weren't just sat in a seat being spoken at, or to, or in front of. You were in there, up close and personal. The fact that it was, if you like, ordinary members of the community performing there as well gave it an extra kind of resonance."

WILL CHAMBERLAIN



Wedding Community Play (photo: Belfast Exposed)

The emergence of New Belfast Community Arts Initiative

In December 1999 New Belfast Community Arts Initiative (New Belfast) was constituted following a series of committee meetings that year. CAF board members including Martin Lynch and Dave Hyndman were instrumental in overseeing the emergence of this new organisation. In an application, New Belfast was designed to be:

“A partnership of community arts and training deliverers and community development groups from across the city of Belfast, who have come together to share skills and resources and a vision of a New Belfast.”

CAF was influential in developing the mission and shape of New Belfast. The initiative was to focus on the expansion of community arts across Belfast and drew together the wealth of community practitioners and organisations. New Belfast’s aims were to:

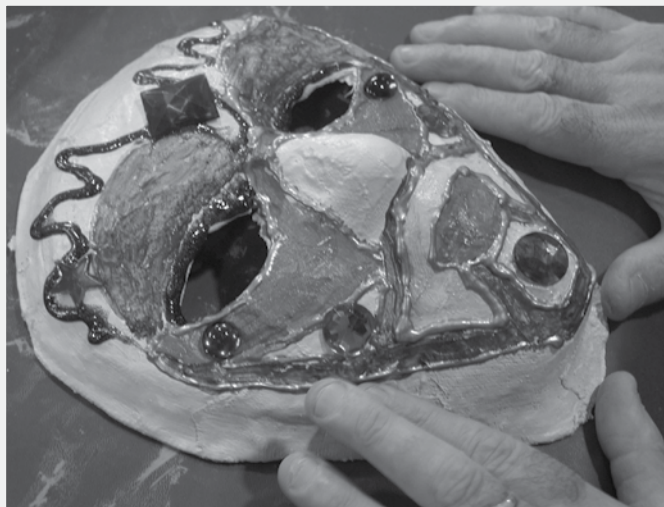
- **develop** a programme of community arts activities over a two year period and produce five major artworks in a range of art forms across Belfast. These artworks would be collaborative and express the experiences, aspirations and creativity of Belfast’s communities
- **challenge** traditional divisions and rivalries between communities through collaborative artwork
- **initiate** and deliver high quality training built around practical arts projects that will harness and direct local skills

- **address** social, environmental, political and economic problems at community level through creative collaboration between artists and communities
- **consolidate** good work done to date and build structures for a future where skills, resources and ideas are shared

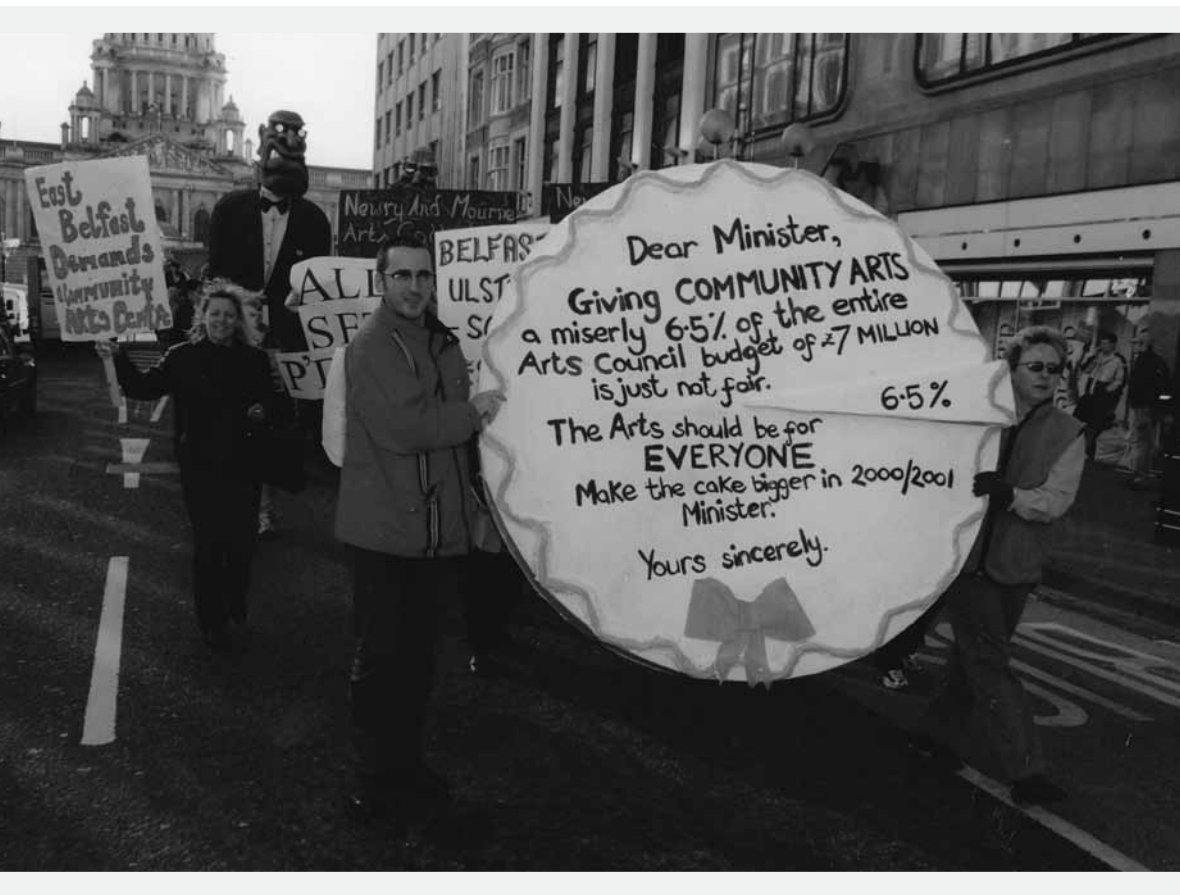
At this time Belfast European Partnership Board Peace I funding had recently been announced. CAF development officer, Pauline Hadaway wrote a successful application:

“Organisations that had been right on the margins were actually placed at the centre. So, it was a time when people were starting to rethink and new policy was coming in, it was quite a dynamic time really. Of course, in the UK, since 1997, there had already been this kind of shift towards these new arts funding ideas”

New Belfast had also received considerable initial funding support from the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL) and had lobbied for other such initiatives to be replicated across Northern Ireland.



Images from the Masque project.



Demonstrators at the March to DCAL in 2000



2000 - 2002

DCAL rally

One important landmark in the history of CAF lobbying was a large scale demonstration to the offices of the Department for Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL) in 2000. The demonstration was to highlight the proportion of arts spend allocated to community arts at that time. Over 30 community arts groups were represented:

"My definitive CAF moment actually took place when I was out of the country but it sticks in my mind as a bit of a glorious day. The march from City Hall to the Interpoint building, home to the newly formed Department of Culture Arts and Leisure which was basically to protest over the lack of funding for community arts from the Arts Council. The images and stories from that day I think encapsulate CAF's ability to bring together all these disparate arts forms and all these diverse people who are unified in one purpose which is arts for the people. We had the giant cake representing the arts spend in Northern Ireland with the tiny slice that symbolised the community arts budget which we delivered to DCAL and the head of the arts branch actually kept it in his office for some time."

WILL CHAMBERLAIN

At this time; positions on the ACNI board were advertised for the first time and several community arts representatives were appointed. Funding for community arts doubled – from around £500,000 to around £1 million and optimism within the community arts sector grew.



Above: Participants at the launch of the Belfast Wheel project

Below: Roisin McDonough, ACNI and staff from CAF and New Belfast at the unveiling of the first Belfast Wheel Installation



New Belfast 2000 - 2001

New Belfast enjoyed great success and impact in its first 18 months, using funding to develop projects in sculpture, carnival, poetry, film and theatre. These projects were guided by Lizzie Devlin who was appointed as the first programme coordinator.

The Belfast Wheel, coordinated by Angela George, was a public art project, with two phases, one creating mosaics at local level and one creating the Belfast Wheel installation which is sited at Cotton Court in Belfast's Cathedral Quarter.

The Hall of Fame, coordinated by Sally Young, was a carnival arts project, making large-scale puppets of Belfast heroes and heroines. The artistic team brought together artists who had worked mostly with the BEAT Initiative (then based in east Belfast) and artists who had worked with Carnival Chaos (based in west Belfast).

Poetry in Motion, coordinated by Joe Sheehy with Josh Schultz as curator was a creative writing project, producing books, post-cards, billboards and public performances. It produced the School's Project 2001 Booklet and You Can't Eat Flags For Breakfast. A total of 20 billboards were placed in key sites all over Belfast.

Strangers Next Door, a lens-based visual arts project, led to exhibitions, billboards and publications and was delivered by two organisations, WheelWorks and Belfast Exposed.

Football Mad, a community play project that subsequently became independent of New Belfast. Following the Wedding Community Play, some of those groups involved committed themselves to work together again on Playing For Time, as it was renamed. They subsequently formed a new organisation to run the project, the Community Theatre Association of Belfast.

"[New Belfast] has demonstrated capacity building using the arts as a tool, mobilising people and honestly engaging with issues of division and the legacy of the conflict. It has been innovative and creative and delivered professionally. People have come together across the city, across many different kinds of boundaries; it is very hard to put a price on that kind of networking."

DEIRDRE MCBRIDE



Preparations for the Hall of Fame project

Arts Council for Northern Ireland appoints a new Chief Executive

Roisín McDonough was appointed chief executive of the Arts Council (ACNI) in October 2000 at a watershed time in the development of ACNI and the wider arts sector in Northern Ireland. This was also just as the new strategy and five year plan were published. Roisín McDonough came from a strong background in community work and urban regeneration within the voluntary sector and it was anticipated that she would be an excellent choice for extending the arts to all.

"Community arts play a pivotal role in Northern Ireland's journey towards a shared future based on tolerance, understanding and mutual respect. The community arts sector in Northern Ireland has flourished over the last 15 years and now sets the standard for community arts practice internationally. The Arts Council remains committed to supporting the development of the sector and enhancing opportunities for local communities to engage with the arts."

ROISÍN MCDONOUGH

Full time community arts training programme

In 2000 CAF received funding from Proteus through Peace II to deliver a full time training programme. This ran between October 2000 and June 2001. Trainees attended a combination of training and work placement. The programme was accredited by Queen's University at access level and there were three modules which covered: Project management; Community arts: theories, history and background and Training for trainers.

Community arts workshops ran over the three modules and were an integral part of the programme, demonstrating first hand for trainees good practice within community arts.

The work placements were with a range of community and community arts organisations including Belfast Exposed, Northern Ireland Youth Forum, WheelWorks and Pilot's Row.

"Heather, Nicole and I interviewed the applicants and settled on about fifteen participants. The morning the course started I asked participants to create individual time-lines asking them to consider all the motivations that had attracted them to the course. I did a timeline myself and clearly remember it having a huge impact upon me. There was a great energy and excitement that was about more than the work CAF was delivering.

Having been engaged in creating theatre work within communities it was now exciting to be passing those skills on to others. It was challenging my abilities - making me think laterally."

JO EGAN

"It was a great networking opportunity. I met a lot of really great people that were on the training courses and it opened up my ideas about what community arts could be as well."

MEL WATSON

This programme was delivered by Heather Floyd with Cathy Gallagher providing the administrative support.

All Ireland Conference 2001

In 2001 CAF and CAFE (Creative Activity for Everyone) jointly held a major all Ireland conference themed Community Arts – The Next Five Years. The idea was that community arts activists from all over Ireland would come together and debate the future of community arts over the following five years. The delegates planned five years of community arts activities which were broken into five areas: infrastructure, sustainability, local government and community arts, influencing government policy and standards of practice.

Staff changes for CAF

In October 2001, after lengthy consideration, Martin Lynch decided to leave CAF to focus on his writing which he had had to put on hold due to the demands of the post. Staff and board threw a huge leaving party at Belfast Circus School to recognise his outstanding contribution to the organisation. Performances were aplenty including a community theatre piece especially devised for the occasion. Martin was presented with a beautiful portrait by Rita Duffy. The evening marked a turning point for the organisation as one director left and another one came in.

Heather Floyd took up the position in January 2002. She had previously been employed as training director in CAF and had worked in Shankill Women's Centre for eight years before that.

Around the same time, development officer Pauline Hadaway left and was replaced by Maureen Harkins who remained with the organisation until 2008.

New Belfast 2001-2002

By the middle of 2001 the funding outlook had turned much gloomier for New Belfast. Joe Sheehy was now programme coordinator and tried valiantly to access funding but the operation had to work at a much reduced level. Even with reduced funding, New Belfast still rolled out another creative programme into 2002 which included Poetry in Motion Public in 34 community centres.

The same year also saw the acclaimed publication *The Lonely Poets Guide to Belfast*. Poetry in Motion Schools continued in 30 schools, working with some 1,200 participants. New Belfast also launched a multi-media project This is Me and an artist training programme (formerly Hall of Fame). The Glass Poetry Wall sculpture was produced and exhibited as part of the Between the Lines literary festival.

"Seamus Heaney has provided poetry for our programmes, also Michael Longley. Medbh McGuckian, Sinéad Morrissey and Ruth Carr have facilitated on projects. We have signature visual artists that have been working on the programmes, whose work would also be sold in galleries and so on. So you're not branded a 'community artist' and you don't have to have a particular outlook, just a passion to assist others in exploring their creativity."

CONOR SHIELDS

"The school has been involved with the Poetry In Motion programme now for seven years (approximately) with all pupils involved having benefitted considerably from this programme. The artists involved have had an excellent rapport with the children and were successful in keeping them interested throughout. As well as the educational aspect pupils found the programme both enjoyable and funny. All staff were amazed at the pupil's ability to respond and create personal poetry. The poets loved the experience of being able to work with children from a travelling background. The programme assisted personal development in that it adapted to the children's beliefs, interests and abilities. In conclusion the whole school has benefitted in that the children have been given the opportunity to work with poets and develop skills in writing poetry."

JOHN MCCAFFERY

At this time Josh Schultz and Geoff Harden were managing all aspects of the organisation. By 2002 there was now no core funding and only some project grants from Belfast Education and Library Board and Children in Need.

Geoff, with years of experience running the Belfast Folk Festival, quickly streamlined all administration and Josh, brimming with ideas and energy, looked for new opportunities. Both saw the programme through a challenging period of uncertainty, primarily as volunteers. New Belfast was then joined by Conor Shields, who came into the office as a volunteer and had been a facilitator on the Community Video Kiosk and This Is Me projects.

"I was recruited by Josh Schultz and Joe Sheehy to work on various programmes, so I worked on the This Is Me programme, did some song-writing workshops, and Josh and myself developed a thing called the Community Video Kiosk, because I was doing film work at the time, too. The Video Kiosk was an interesting one, where we took the premise of the Diary Room from Big Brother where you went into a space and you could speak to a camera without seeing anybody. It was somewhat confessional, but you could address what was going on in your community. It was almost like a telephone kiosk. This pod, this kiosk landed in your area, in your local community centre or your local shopping centre. And it was for people to air their concerns, ambitions, but with an idea that we would take the output, we would take those interviews and bring them to the attention of policy-makers, of government, of whatever."

CONOR SHIELDS



Conor Shields and friends drumming up support at the 10th Anniversary of CAF.

Developing dance in your community conference

The Developing dance in your community conference took place in the Waterside Theatre in Derry over two days in October 2002. Speakers came from Northern Ireland, England and the Republic of Ireland. CAF ran the event with partners Dance Northern Ireland as part of the Derry based Gathering festival.

The conference aimed to develop dance within a community context and to highlight current and planned dance initiatives with arts and disability groups. Organisers wanted to promote the benefits of dance and provide opportunities to explore good practice in Ireland and the UK. The conference aimed to develop dance programmes in community centres across the north.

As a result of the conference, Dance Northern Ireland agreed to prepare a local dance strategy. Many informal contacts were made which resulted in the increased development of dance activity across the region.



2003 - 2005

10th anniversary of CAF

Representing a sector as diverse as community arts, it is only natural that CAF meant different things to different people. As CAF matured as an organisation, its appetite to campaign on behalf of community arts remained undiminished. To mark the occasion acclaimed poet, Moyra Donaldson penned the following poem in honour of CAF.

*Substance
a celebration of CAF's first decade*

*By vision of heart and passion of mind
garnering new ground,
clearing a way
to common possession -
singing against the silence.*

*We have uncaged the wren,
thrown wide the doors of our hearts
and un-prismed the colours of hope
to dance undaunted: we have tasted
the boundlessness of our imagination*

*and when I grow tired, you'll lend
me strength, and when you doubt*

*I will believe: line and curve
our architecture, we'll risk together
the flaw that lets the light come in.*

*Art for art's sake, art for life's sake,
art for the people's sake -
you and me
for pleasure and truth
and beauty and madness and sanity.*

MOYRA DONALDSON
2003

With the 10th anniversary came a new strategic plan, a new website and a range of online resources aimed at assisting CAF members and the wider community arts sector. CAF witnessed a huge shift from paper to electronic publications. Increasingly, CAF was disseminating information through the website and the e-bulletin, the Community Arts Weekly (CAW) introduced by the next information officer, Chris Ball.



New Belfast 2003-04

In New Belfast new staff member Conor Shields began to look at developing funding applications, primarily a Belfast Local Strategy Partnership Peace II application and ACNI's Annual Support for Organisations (ASOP). Early in 2003, the first news that began the turnaround was received – the Arts Council awarded ASOP as core funding and Belfast City Council offered annual funding. In June the staff and board learned that the application to the Belfast Local Strategy Partnership had been successful and the largest single award to community arts was made, at over £225,000.

"I came on-board in that period, in the more administrative aspect of things, and tried to help with fundraising. New Belfast had tried, I think four times, to access Peace II funds, and each time had been turned down. And so I came in and I worked as a volunteer for what must have been six months on that application. And it was a successful application. It brought, at that time, the largest single award into community arts, of £225,000. We didn't get everything we wanted, but we got the guts of it. It was brilliant. I suppose that was a big, big turning point for New Belfast."

CONOR SHIELDS

These awards heralded the re-defining of New Belfast, supporting five core project strands and developing a programme of 60 community groups and 30 schools taking part right across the city.

New Belfast could now develop a programme to assist the most socially and economically marginalised communities in Belfast. New projects could be looked at and more artists offered opportunities to work, learn and develop. More creative connections were made at participant, management, artist and strategic levels. New Belfast could expand its project base and in turn grow its participation, increase access to the arts for communities, increase opportunity and finally start to see the promise of a city-wide programme realised.

"We're very much pitching it as accessible arts. The door is open, it's for communities, for people who've never lifted a paintbrush in their life other than to do up their front room, or never thought that they could write a poem, never thought that they could get involved in producing a public sculpture that would be there for generations."

CONOR SHIELDS

A new staff team was assembled, with Sally Young (Masque), Ken Armstrong (This Is Me), Julie-Anne Graham (Trash Fashion), Mark Madden (Poetry in Motion Public) Olivia Butler (Poetry in Motion Schools) and Patricia Lavery (Belfast Wheel) as project co-ordinators. Geoff Harden gained the new post of finance and administration manager and Conor Shields became programme director. The dynamic, tireless and innovative Josh Schultz left for London but his legacy would be felt in this further development of New Belfast's work.

“New Belfast was/is more than just an arts delivery-based organisation. Its mission was an urgent response to the fast evolving social and cultural dialogue in Belfast post-peace process. In that context, the arts were an ideal tool to foster and nurture creativity and dialogue through activities based in local communities, including the hardest hit areas of the city. This dialogue wasn’t just for young people, it was for everybody. From its earliest days under Lizzie Devlin and Joe Sheehy, New Belfast strove continuously for a best practice approach that was based on principles of inclusiveness. It brought together communities and artists through a bottom-up approach that refused the parachuting of artists into communities.

There were many personal highlights during the three years I was at New Belfast, however, one discussion with members of the consortium at the start of a programme year stands out very distinctly. The discussion was focused around not what the consortium members could bring to their own particular communities, but rather what work and resources were needed overall. What emerged was a teasing out of how the arts could address, for example, the various gaps faced by young people in Belfast and about the integration of people with disabilities in programmes with the wider community.

I often recall the craic in the office with Geoff Harden, Joe, Conor and Sally. Joe Sheehy was an informal mentor to me, a good friend and of great influence in my personal development. Joe McVey was a stellar chair person and an absolute rock. These people never tired of giving of themselves and, for that, we are all better off.”

JOSH SCHULTZ

The new team would be responsible for the next phase of programme development, aided by their strategically-focused board.

From 2003 to 2004 over 900 young people took part in Poetry in Motion Schools and 650 participants of all ages came through the core programme. Through a new relationship with the Workers’ Educational Association 87 people had accessed accredited training and certification (OCN qualifications at levels 1-3). The evaluation that year commented:

“At a community level, it is clear that through the connection of New Belfast, the distance between communities is being reduced. The awareness that all are working on a city-wide project, that they will be exhibiting and performing together, underlines this connection.”

DEIRDRE MCBRIDE



Conor Shields



Participants of Trash Fashion use the Lisburn Road as an impromptu catwalk

CAF training Artists to Entrepreneurs

In 2004 CAF introduced a training programme in partnership with Stakeholder Development that encouraged artists to develop strategic plans and cash flows for the year, including identifying a vision for their careers. Throughout the two runs of the programme, information was given about community arts. The programme aimed to assist community artists to stay in the community arts sector and help to reduce burn out, leading to a strengthened sector. Over the two years, the course engaged with 23 artists.

"My memories are all fond, a gathering of 15 or so community artists from Belfast and beyond all of different disciplines; experts in many fields - drama, music, painting and sculpture - but all facing the same tough reality that community arts presents. We explored together all our working practices - we found that we had problems and solutions to share. We began most of us strangers and finished great friends much more knowledgeable than before. The islands that we thought we were as individuals had become a supportive network of friends. Ultimately the programme was fun and that's the thing about learning - you do most of it when you are having fun!"

GRAINNE KIELTY

An Outburst of Frankness

An Outburst of Frankness (Outburst) was published in 2004. It was developed with partners City Arts Centre and Create in Dublin. The title came from a throw away comment made by Michael D. Higgins when he was minister for the arts, culture and the Gaeltacht at the launch of the first Arts Plan.

It was decided to produce *Outburst* as, up until then, community arts had failed 'to secure its own memory or to articulate... its values and work through dedicated printed texts' ¹. Traditionally, community arts practitioners had been too busy 'doing' to write up and record practice or publish outcomes and impact. *Outburst* was a response to 'the way community arts has been relegated to the sidelines of contemporary cultural history in Ireland and is a step towards redressing this balance' ²

Outburst charts community arts on the island from a quiet revolution in the 1970s to a cultural phenomenon which has impacted on every aspect of current cultural life. It contains input from leading practitioners and interested parties on the island including Ailbhe Murphy, Martin Lynch, Fintan O'Toole and Declan McGonagle. Much thought went into contributors. As well as recording a history of community arts, *Outburst* aimed to create debate and dialogue.

¹ *An Outburst of Frankness* edited by Sandy Fitzgerald 2004 ² *Ibid*

The body of the book is made up of 14 essays grouped under three main headings:

- Community arts in context
- Funding, ethics and quality
- Practice

Implicit in the text is the sad fact that as the number of community arts projects and practitioners grew, far outnumbering the artists and audiences of the established arts world, a comparable level of support and recognition never manifested itself. Also running throughout the text is the firm belief in ‘creativity as a primary force for individual and communal change, empowerment and celebration’

Outburst was launched at the end of 2004 as part of Belfast Festival at Queen’s and in Dublin at the same time of year.

New Belfast Big Event

In May 2004, New Belfast threw its first Big Event in Rosemary Street Presbyterian Church Hall, as part of the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival, with over 120 performers taking part, over 500 in attendance, 23 volunteers and an exhibition of outcomes from over half of all groups taking part in the core programme.

Strategically, New Belfast had now cemented its role to provide a coherent series of projects that all came together in an event, performance or production. This level of programming developed the necessary momentum to look at gaps in provision and respond to opportunities that such cross community projects created. There was an opportunity to look at extending programming for people with a disability and the Side by Side project began. This project brought together special schools, training centres, residential homes and day centres with local community and youth centres, mainstream schools and colleges. Claire Concannon became project co-ordinator and remains so today.

Let's Get It Right campaign

Belfast's Cathedral Quarter has been identified as the city's key cultural locality, a fact which, coupled with the relatively low rents in the area, has made it the traditional home of arts organisations.

The future of Cathedral Quarter was thrown into doubt with the announcement that parts of the area were to be redeveloped as part of a major retail scheme. Those living and working in the area welcomed the fact that efforts were being made to revitalise the Quarter. However the plans, lodged by William Ewart in March 2003, were widely criticised by arts groups and residents, who feared they would do little to regenerate the area.

Concerned parties became particularly incensed by plans to construct a 640 space multi-storey car park in the heart of Cathedral Quarter, which they felt would act as a physical barrier between the area and the rest of Belfast city centre. Increased traffic flow created by the car park, which ran contrary to government policies on car usage, would have further inhibited the movement of people into Cathedral Quarter.

Following a meeting with the developer in April 2004 concerned parties came together to form the Cathedral Quarter – Let's Get it Right campaign, which aimed to push forward the sensitive and successful development of the area.

In July 2004 the group published a response to the proposed retail development. This response not only articulated the concerns of residents, businesses and individuals, but also demonstrated how the planned retail scheme ran contrary to public policy in terms of traffic in the city centre, urban living, conservation of buildings and public consultation.

In October 2004, in a move that was applauded by the Let's Get it Right campaign, DSD announced that Cathedral Quarter would have its own regeneration master plan. This would push forward development of the area, while protecting its unique built and cultural heritage.

"Another lobbying piece that stands out is the Let's Gets It Right campaign in Cathedral Quarter which lobbied for sensitive development in the area, especially in relation to a proposed development which was Cathedral Way then and is now Royal Exchange. A lot of what we recommended in Let's Get it Right influenced Department for Social Development (DSD) policy and it influenced subsequent plans by the developers."

HEATHER FLOYD

Summer mural festival

Through European Social Fund support, and with additional resources from Brighter Belfast, New Belfast hosted its second Big Event in St George's Market, December 2004. The work of the organisation was celebrated using a massive main stage, full lighting rig, sound system, catwalk, temporary theatre/cinema and various workshop areas. There was also a 60 foot long mural workshop and a bus tour of all the new 15 murals across Belfast created as part of the earlier Summer Mural Festival, supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's Development Fund.

"I remember talking to the board about the potential to look at murals in a different way and explore opportunities for communities to really get involved in their production. I discussed it with our ACNI officer, Julianne McCormick, who pointed me towards ACNI's Development Fund. The Summer Mural Festival I think made significant developments in the world of mural-making as well... there was a broadening of the vocabulary of murals."

CONOR SHIELDS

The success of the Summer Mural Festival, co-ordinated by Tracey McVerry, in 2004 showed that public artworks could help local people re-establish their civic space and participate directly, often transforming images of paramilitarism to re-imagined images of communities with diverse needs, aspirations and abilities. This re-

imaging, would later be recognised as helping form the basis for a major ACNI initiative Re-Imaging Communities, a regional programme supported by a host of funders to the tune of £3.3 million. New Belfast tendered for and was awarded the contract to be lead consultant for 16 potential projects within Re-imaging Communities. This process led to the development of 12 major pieces of artwork ranging from a series of murals in the lower Shankill through to a variety of public sculptures in various areas such as Legoniel, Lower Ormeau and the Village.

Belfast Wheel (II) project

On a glorious Belfast summer afternoon in June 2005, hundreds turned out to celebrate the launch of the latest Belfast Wheel public sculpture. This stunning bronze dais, installed in a totally re-landscaped park setting at the top of Bradbury Place, exemplified what community arts could do. 12 community groups from all traditions and areas across the city worked long and hard over two years and now their artwork would become a new local landmark. The image of this Belfast Wheel sculpture would become the backdrop to subsequent launches and programmes. It also received recognition through reference in the Public Art Handbook, published soon after by ACNI.



Summer Mural project with Glencairn Initiative



Participants adding to the mural at the Big Event II at St Georges Market

In 2005, New Belfast also began to focus more on the development of spoken word or performance poetry and encouraged groups and individuals to take part in slam events. The first New Belfast Poetry Cup was programmed as part of Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival in 2005. New Belfast also published BT1 A New Poet's Code that year.

By 2005, New Belfast had grown to over seven project strands. The level of participants benefiting from the core programme reached 2,616 in a year.



Work in progress with the Duncairn mural project

2005 Changes in Northern Ireland society

Between 2005 and 2007 the CAF engaged in a series of conferences, seminars, discussion panels, exchanges and workshops exploring the role that arts and culture can play in tackling conflict, exclusion and intolerance between and within communities.

"I think community arts is a really good tool to address sectarianism, racism and a very successful intervention if for example sectarian violence erupts very quickly the way it can do here. I think across the globe there are really good examples of where community arts has been used as part of capacity building and peace building. I think community arts helps people to tell their story, which is a very important part of peace building."

HEATHER FLOYD

The thinking behind organising this series of events was to share local learning about how the arts can be used as part of a peace process with international colleagues.

CAF produced a comprehensive report detailing the work of this programme, including the two conferences Arts: Towards an inclusive society (2005) and Cultures and Conflicts (2006)

"The peace agreement brought a lot of issues of racism and it is well known about. I think, through community arts and through the medium of arts both community and the very professional arts, we have addressed a lot of issues and I think arts has been one tool that has got no barriers. No language barriers, no colour barriers and no other issues and that is what was the best thing about community arts."

NISHA TANDON

Arts: Towards an inclusive society conference

Arts: Towards an inclusive society took place over three days in Belfast Waterfront Hall and 20 venues across the city in October 2005. It ran as part of Belfast Festival at Queen's.

During the conference, CAF aimed to show delegates as much of the city as possible so that they were not restricted to one venue, but were given a broader landscape. This included St. George's Market and a boat trip on the Lagan with traditional music and ceilidh dancing. The main conference banquet took place in the Indian Community Centre facilitated by the local Indian community.

The conference explored how community arts was being used in contentious and challenging environments, with a focus on environments dealing with peace building work. It attracted 26

speakers and 200 delegates from 18 nationalities. Speakers came from a wide range of countries and had different and interesting experiences which they shared with delegates. The key note speaker was Bill Strickland, Manchester City Guild in America who spoke about the power of the arts to change lives and included examples from different projects. He promoted developing 'hopeful' spaces to create positive learning experiences for marginalised people and groups.

"I think to us in CAF and to funders and others, not only is there a unique, but there's a real world-class community arts practice in Northern Ireland, so it was a wonderful opportunity to profile that."

PATRICIA FREEDMAN

The conference delivered an extensive workshop programme which took place in 20 community centres throughout Belfast. The workshop themes included: art in health case studies; healing the trauma of war; arts as a tool for memorialisation and respecting difference – building an inclusive society for all children. CAF delivered a seminar programme in the year leading up to the conference to create momentum and increase the impact.

Attendees came from a wide range of minority groups from ethnic to disability groups, from loyalist to republican groups. This mix resulted in a creative, cultural melting pot with many different colours, creeds, languages and beliefs, all pursuing one aim – to explore differing contexts in which the arts takes place, especially deeply challenging contexts.

"People like Martin Lynch had been part of community arts from a very early stage and had contributed, as had many others, a great amount of thought as to how it could go forward, and as a result it's a unique collaborative practice. I think in other parts of the world, from what we could see, you had some very good random initiatives, one-off initiatives and not nearly as much of a collaborative effort ... and not nearly as integrated into social policy, and there's certainly more of that work that can happen, but Northern Ireland had actually taken some steps there that other places looked at with great admiration and I think that's reflected in some of the comments from the conference also."

PATRICIA FREEDMAN

Patricia Freedman was employed as conference director and she delivered Arts: Towards an inclusive society and the follow-on Cultures and Conflicts which took place in 2006. Niamh Flanagan worked with Patricia both years to deliver these events. Conference chair was Gerri Moriarty who brought vast experience and enthusiasm and worked closely with organisers throughout the year to ensure the event was a success.

"It certainly gave CAF an opportunity to explore something that had been on their agenda for a while, which was partnering and expanding – not that CAF wanted to expand beyond Northern Ireland, but to develop some lines of communication with other networks in Europe and elsewhere, to reach out to community arts practitioners outside of Northern Ireland."

PATRICIA FREEDMAN

"Its one of the best conferences I've ever been at. It included performances, participative workshops, and world class speakers. The energy was absolutely brilliant. It led to a follow on event which was Cultures and Conflicts in 2006. It took place in the Waterfront Hall and we had a whole workshop programme running across the city as part of the conference in community centres. Delegates got to see, especially delegates from outside Belfast and Northern Ireland, a prestigious venue, the Waterfront, and then a whole range of smaller community venues to get a sense of what was going on in community centres across the city."

HEATHER FLOYD

New Belfast 2005 – 2006

In 2005-2006 New Belfast started exploring the idea of developing a dedicated community arts centre. The Assembly Rooms on Waring Street in the Cathedral Quarter, chimed with the ethos of New Belfast. It was a civic forum, a pre-cursor to a City Hall, where Belfast citizens discussed the new democratic possibilities of contemporary enlightenment thinking. The Assembly Rooms hosted the first Carolan Harp Festival in 1791. All distances in Belfast were measured from its front door. It was literally Belfast One (BT1). With ACNI support, New Belfast commissioned an economic appraisal of this potential development of the Creative Cluster and began consultation with groups and organisations across the city. The vision was a dedicated arts centre which would accommodate workshop, retail, and office space, a quality performance space and artist in residence accommodation.

New Belfast also extended its funding to develop a range of social economic enterprises that could dovetail with the Creative Cluster proposal. At this time, in reviewing and evaluating the programme through the economic appraisal process, it was proven by KPMG that 84% of all New Belfast's work was located within the most deprived communities in Northern Ireland.

In 2006 Century City took place in Ulster Hall. This event, the most diverse to date, was co-ordinated by Francesca Biondi.

As part of Belfast City Hall's centenary year, a full programme of events took place, from fashion shows, workshops, film screenings, mural making and concerts (featuring local amateur bands, community groups and professional artists Colin Reid and Juliet Turner).

In looking at new ways to measure successful outcomes, New Belfast became the first organisation in Ireland to demonstrate the Social Return on Investment (SROI) model. SROI calculated the monetised benefits deriving from its workshop programme. It was championed by the New Economics Foundation in London as a key instrument in showing how investment in the third sector could yield benefit. This process found that investment in one New Belfast's project produced 14 times more benefit in return by taking people off benefits, offering employment to unemployed artists, supporting young people into training and promoting health benefits for participants. That's a £14 return for every £1 invested. Even with such findings, attracting significant investment in community arts was proving difficult as Peace II neared its close.

This would prove to be a challenging time, but the staff team, now joined by Francesca Biondi as business development manager pressed ahead with developing the programme and maintaining services to the most socially and economically marginalised in Belfast.

New Belfast succeeded in becoming a Multi-Annual Funding client of Belfast City Council in 2005/6. This meant that until 2009, secure funding could act as a lever for other funding. ACNI also increased

its support for the programme through the Annual Support for Organisations Programme (ASOP) which provided core funding. Access Lottery funding was also secured for project work.

Whilst the programme was healthy and the prospects for expansion bright, there were some major setbacks. Geoff Harden, a local legend who had begun and maintained the Belfast Folk Festival throughout the darkest days of the conflict and a founding staff member of New Belfast, had become increasingly unwell and passed away in September 2006. Added to this, the dream that Geoff had held of a dedicated community arts centre in the former Northern Bank (Assembly Rooms) would not be supported in its proposed form by DCAL.

"Conceptually and practically, New Belfast has designed an integrated approach to flagship regeneration in part of the Central Business District that has been in severe structural decline over the last 30 years. The Creative Cluster provides a physical space, in keeping with stated government plans for the area, which has the potential to be populated by viable arts and culture businesses situated in a dedicated arts space."

DR BRENDAN MURTAGH

"Mobilising individuals and communities through arts projects based on areas of common concern, including the environment, culture, good citizenship, and new skills can be developed in managing diversity, equality and anti-sectarianism. The intervention has developed opportunities for career guidance, training to jobseekers and potentially, sustainable, high quality jobs. It has the capacity to stimulate social entrepreneurship in a sector where creativity, risk and innovation and are important qualities"

DR BRENDAN MURTAGH



The first Hall of Fame carnival arts project



Sally Young and a captive audience from Glencairn Youth Initiative and the Frank Gillen Centre at a puppet workshop as part of the Masque project



Geoff Harden and Conor Shields



2006 - 2009

Business Smarts

In 2006 CAF introduced a seven week training programme in partnership with Stakeholder Development offering the opportunity for participants to develop their business skills. During the programme, participating groups were supported to develop three year organisational strategies and an operational plan. In addition to this, participants were given training in policy and procedures in compliance with Setting Standards, Improving Performance and a three year resource plan covering people, equipment, infrastructure and finance.

Business Smarts also delivered a series of master classes which included:

- Innovation in community arts programmes and practices
- Developing strategic partnerships and networks
- Social enterprise through arts
- Delivering social change/regeneration through community arts organisations
- Skills development within community arts organisation
- Leadership in community arts organisations.

A Woman's Part

A Woman's *Part* was a programme which explored the role of women as activists during the conflict in Northern Ireland. It used drama, creative writing and experiential learning. Participants came from trade union, security force, loyalist and republican combatant, human rights and community activist backgrounds. It was originally envisaged that it would run twice, once in Belfast and once in a rural area, but ended up running over an extended period of 14 days in Belfast. The process engaged participants at such a deep level that it could not have been completed over seven days. A Woman's *Part* recruited 14 participants and the work of 11 women was included in a publication *A woman's part in the conflict*. Vignettes of several poems and stories from the publication were also developed and performed at five events in 2007.

"We felt that often women were presented as 'women kept the peace' and if women had been running the country it would have been very different so we wanted to take that and unpick it a bit, because kind of implicit in that is women don't have a position on the constitutional position."

HEATHER FLOYD

"It was looking at bringing dispersed groups together; it was looking at the story of women which was really not enough within the consciousness of people here. The stories were quite important and stories that were very orientated towards activism, because we were stripping

stereotypes...That is always one that will stay very strongly with me. I felt very connected to it, the support, and CAF were phenomenally supportive the whole way through. I thought as a model of practice, it was really of a high calibre. Everything about it guaranteed that it would be a successful project because it was thoroughly documented, managed and planned... it felt very much that there was a good buoyancy and a perfect springboard to transform those stories into a piece of dramatised written work"

ORLA MCKEAGNEY

"The budding artist is in us all just waiting to explode on the stage or through our creative writing. CAF brought these talents and hidden desires to the fore and the women involved will ensure that women will have a place and a voice in influencing policy makers on social and political issues."

"I found the course, at times, to be emotionally draining but also very rewarding. We listened to each other and respected each other. At no time was I uncomfortable in the group. I thoroughly enjoyed and gained so much from this experience. I would certainly participate in another cross community project as this was a very positive and rewarding."

A WOMAN'S PART PARTICIPANT

New Belfast 2006 - 2009

From 2006 to 2009, New Belfast facilitated over 12,500 participants, employing 337 artists in the process. Added to this, New Belfast social economy projects were assisting the organisation deliver programmes.

At this time the Century Citizen sculpture was developed for installation in Belfast's city centre. Write Here, Right Now and Write to Be Heard poetry anthologies were published having been developed through poet residencies around the city and Side by Side. Masque, This Is Me, Belfast Wheel and Trash Fashion engaged collectively 138 community, youth, training, day care and resource centres.

"New Belfast ploughed its own furrow, as being a project-driven organisation with lots of participation. We averaged 3,500 participants through the programme a year, that's completing projects and going in to do a full series of workshops in one of our eight programmes."

CONOR SHIELDS

"The kids really enjoyed it and had a really good time and were asking when they can come back. They had a good laugh with the workers and loved trash fashion. It brings them out and they came on in leaps and bounds. We could do with plenty more of these."

SADIE DRAKE

"Three years ago Hannahstown Senior's Group were invited take part in the New Belfast Community Arts Initiative. Conor visited the group and proposed a series of arts initiatives that they could avail of. A professional package of taster sessions including visual art, story telling etc was welcomed and thus delivered with great success. Following from this our group were engaged in very challenging art projects including a wall hanging of Hannahstown and a series of wildlife mosaics which are now featured in our community garden. Brilliant craic and enthusiasm developed throughout these workshops and this in itself managed to break down a lot of social and individual apprehensions and boundaries. Three cheers to all of the arts facilitators who were co-producers of excellent pieces of art coupled with its therapeutic values!"

KAREN GOWDY



Trash Fashion in the Mayor's parlour with then Lord Mayor of Belfast, Naomi Long

"This process is carried out on the terms of the community groups themselves and within the organisations broader remit of the development of social dialogue within the city. The work has therefore created a context for cross-community involvement in addition to the need for groups to work together."

DR BRENDAN MURTAGH



New Belfast Artists at Culture Night Belfast

Cultures and Conflicts

Cultures and Conflicts was chaired by Gerri Moriarty and delivered by Patricia Freedman and Niamh Flanagan. The conference took place in October 2006 in the Spectrum Centre on Belfast's Shankill Road and in a variety of community centres across the city, in particular on the Falls and Shankill Roads. North and west Belfast were badly affected during the conflict and the significance of the venues was not lost on speakers or delegates.

Although it continued to explore the theme of creating more peaceful, inclusive societies, Cultures and Conflicts was markedly different from Arts: Towards an inclusive society. Whereas the 2005 event explored community arts practice in different contexts and different challenges, Cultures and Conflicts looked at community arts and conflict from a more policy orientated perspective.

CAF teamed up with European policy and culture networks Banlieues d'Europe and Les Rencontres and local carnival group the Beat Initiative to explore in more detail the impact that arts and culture can play in societies affected by conflict and division. Workshops provided insight, analysis, reflection and the showcasing of community arts projects across the region. Workshops explored: parades (specifically Orangefest); the travelling community; murals; shared neighbourhood theatre; social history of the Shankill and Falls Roads and how to address racism through community arts.

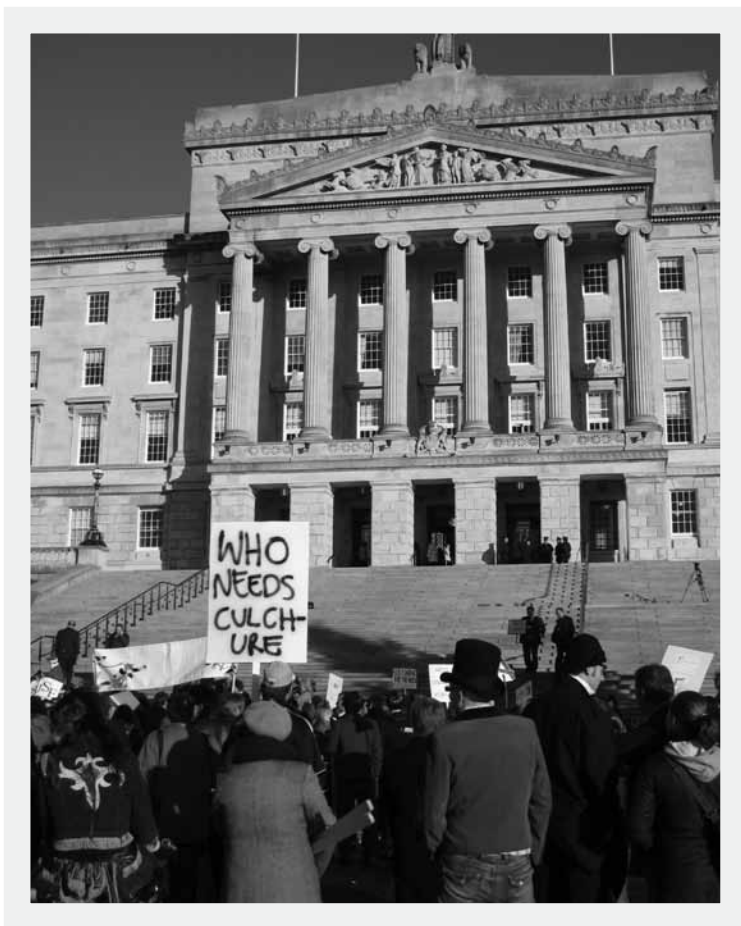
Invest in inspiration

Northern Ireland's arts sector has long been accustomed to financial hardship. Decades of half hearted government support has left artists, organisations and projects continually threatened with oblivion.

By 2006 the funding future was looking particularly bleak. The London 2012 Olympics would be using 4.5 million from the Arts Lottery budget and it was widely anticipated that government arts spending would remain stagnant or decrease. With 56 organisations, 200 jobs and 3,200 projects facing cuts, it was apparent that Northern Ireland's arts sector needed to take a stand before it was too late.

The result was an exhaustive campaign that spanned almost two years and pulled together the energy and efforts of much of the arts sector under the banner Invest in Inspiration. Community arts workers campaigned alongside representatives from orchestras, galleries, theatre companies, festivals, venues, therapists and amateur art enthusiasts. Working alongside ACNI underlining the shared concern, Invest in Inspiration movement was able to make a compelling and watertight case for increased arts funding.

As part of the campaign CAF developed a CAN to highlight benefits of investing in the arts.



Protesters at Stormont as part of the Keep our Arts Alive campaign in December 2007

“Another lobbying highlight would be ‘50 Reasons Why Northern Ireland Needs the Arts’ that we delivered as part of the Invest and Inspiration lobbying campaign to increase per capita spend on arts in the region. And that just gave 50 reasons. It covered health, regeneration, cultural tourism, challenging stereotypes, challenging sectarianism, challenging racism, arts in prisons. It covered a whole range of areas and we sent it to all 108 MLAs.”

HEATHER FLOYD

However, politicians can be slow learners! When the draft budget was published in early 2008, it included a £4.25million funding increase – a figure that failed even to cover the £4.5million set aside from the arts lottery budget. Undeterred the campaign, now dubbed the more urgent, Keep our Arts Alive used the budget consultation period to hammer home its message. The arts sector submitted 3,000 (out of a total 9,000) responses to the budget consultation prompting the government to increase its arts allocation to £7.55 million.

This increase in funding received a cautious welcome by the arts sector. The extra money would secure the future of many essential organisations and projects, but it did little to bridge the £26million disparity in arts funding between Northern Ireland and its compatriots (and competitors) in the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. It was essentially a short-term sticking plaster for a long-term problem.

In fact the extra funding proved to be more short term than anyone could have anticipated. Government cuts, prompted by the global financial crisis, meant that the arts never received the windfall it had fought so hard to secure. However, the campaign should not be viewed as a failure. Without the recognition and additional funds garnered over the two years the arts sector would currently be facing an even more devastating rounds of cuts. And who knows? When the good times return the government might actually remember the message of Invest in Inspiration and give the arts the financial support they deserve.

"The challenges are that lobbying can be very slow work and the results can be hard to see and can take a long time to impact on community arts and benefit community arts groups."

HEATHER FLOYD

"What matters wasn't that we could all buy lots of computers to do our administration for our arts. What matters is that there's an equal distribution of access to the arts and if that isn't being taken up then something's going wrong."

WILL CHAMBERLAIN

"To me the greatest legacy of CAF is the powerful advocacy role which it has played and how firmly it led the way in all the major arts campaigns of the last 15 years. From the Invest in Inspiration campaign to the Let's Get it Right Campaign, CAF always led from the front and hopefully the Community Arts Partnership will inherit this role."

SEAN KELLY

Change in CAF strategy

At the end of 2007 CAF produced a three year strategic plan outlining the future direction of CAF. Amongst the aims and objectives, a new strand to undertake research was identified 'CAF recognised that they can influence the future direction of community arts and funding by carrying out solid research into the impact of community arts on communities throughout Northern Ireland'¹

CAF was awarded funding from Belfast City Council Creative Legacies programme to carry out dedicated research into the contribution made by community arts to community and individual development.

The aim of the work was to gather evidence which could be presented to the sector, funders and the government. The project looked at previous work, identifying research methodologies and developing indicators to measure against.

The next stage in the research progressed along two strands. The first, a partnership with YouthAction, trained young people in peer research skills and techniques. The second strand gathered case studies from individuals and initiatives that demonstrated the potential of community arts. The report was launched at the Creative Legacies conference in March 2011.

¹ CAF Strategic Plan 2008-2011

Arts and health conference

In October 2007 CAF teamed up with partners ArtsCare and the Community Development and Health Network (CHDN) to deliver the Arts and Health conference. The aim of the conference was to launch the CHDN major report on arts and health Arts and Health: A Community Development and Action Research Project. The report included very strong findings including:

- 98% of participants had increased self esteem after being involved in the arts activities
- The increase in benefits occurred in parallel with a decline in negative feelings of well-being such as anxiety, fear and stress.

The report also developed a best practice model which was based on CAF's start up training and workshop programme.

World community arts day

World Community Arts Day was founded in 2007 by Edinburgh community artist Andrew Crummy. CAF hosted events to mark the day in 2008 and 2009 in Belfast's Waterfront Hall, both of which were broadcast in partnership with local community radio. The event was part of a 24 hour radio programme which broadcast a day of readings, music and programmes by internet based radio station Homely Planet.

"I would say most community centres now have some kind of arts programme. Some exclusively do their programmes through the arts, such as New Lodge Arts. The number of community arts centres has mushroomed, like the Playhouse in Derry. Cultúrlann in Belfast got funding to develop a refurbished arts centre there. I think that there are community arts officers now across the region that weren't there ten or twelve years ago."

HEATHER FLOYD

New faces at CAF

This time saw staff changes with information officer Chris Ball emigrating to Canada (gone but not forgotten). He was replaced by Caragh O'Donnell who had started life in CAF as the information assistant post. The information assistant was subsequently filled by Ryan O'Reilly and this period saw a development of electronic output in subscriptions and e-bulletin and web hits rising rapidly with some 2,000 e-subscribers and over 2,300 daily web hits.



The background consists of several overlapping geometric shapes. A large pink shape is on the left. A red shape is in the center, overlapping the pink one. An orange shape is on the right, overlapping the red one. The text '2009 - 2011' is centered in the red area.

2009 - 2011

New Belfast 2009 - 2011

Between 2009 and 2011, New Belfast broadened the scope of its community programme, and developed a lot more participative events that offered new opportunities to get creative.

Having been approached by BBC Radio 4 to host the All-Ireland Slam Heat for the Great Britain Slam 2009, the organisation saw how it could translate its skills as programmers into event organisers and engage more non-traditional audiences.

Hosting poetry events on Thursday nights in the city centre and on Sundays as part of the Sunday in the City initiative, developing exhibitions and workshops in spaces like the concourse of the Waterfront Hall and Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young people (NICCY) had an impact over and above the participation coming through the workshop programme. In these years, there were 8763 programme participants, 365 artist/facilitator assignments across 8 project areas. 54 groups took part in inter-community projects and celebrated through gala performances at the Waterfront Hall (fashion shows and Poetry in Motion Schools events).

New Belfast also produced a large-scale exhibition in the concourse of Waterfront Hall, highlighting the work of the organisation. Work completed included:

- 72 community groups across four projects (Belfast Wheel, Masque, Trash Fashion, This Is Me)
- 30 project processes on the inclusive disability project Side by Side
- 90 schools on the Poetry in Motion for Schools project
- Six poetry anthologies, with audio cds
- 18 poet residencies across Belfast engaging 35 community collective groups in Poetry in Motion Community
- Three large scale Poetry in Motion Community recording events in Oh Yeah Centre and the Black Box
- 175 participants in Year 1, 525 participants in Year 2 and 750 participants in Year 3 of the Culture Night Belfast.
- Three New Cube Slams in Black Box,
- Three Wordwork Sunday literary events in Dark Horse
- 12 large scale cross-community processes in Trash Fashion (4 groups, 2 processes) and Masque (3 groups) Belfast Wheel (2 groups)
- Over 160 groups invited into the consultation process
- Eight additional cross community processes engaged
- Assistance in supporting the inaugural Newcastle Arts Festival 2011 by providing workshops in Trash Fashion and Poetry in Motion.



Poet Dave Lordan reads at a Wordworks event



Children taking part in the 2010 Poetry in Motion Schools launch



Belfast Bloom, a sculpture created by New Belfast and a variety of groups as part of the Citywide Community Programme. To be installed in Botanic Garden, Belfast in 2012



Century Citizen, also created as part of the Citywide Community Programme. To be installed in North Street, Belfast in 2012

Inquiry into arts funding

In 2009 the Committee for Culture Arts and Leisure carried out an inquiry into the funding of the arts in Northern Ireland. The terms of reference for the Inquiry sought to investigate a number of topics including how Northern Ireland compared to other regions in terms of the per capita arts spend; how funding at that time addressed social need and if particular work was not receiving adequate funding in this regard.

On release of the report the chair of the committee Barry McElduff said:

“Investing in community arts has real and tangible benefits for both communities and individuals. They give people the opportunity to develop creative skills which can greatly enhance their employability. This is particularly relevant in this economic climate in which the creative industries are one of the fastest growing sectors here, employing some 36,000 people.”⁶

Recommendations included increasing levels of support and funding to community arts organisations.

¹ Barry McElduff, Chair of Committee for Culture Arts and Leisure 2009

Cultural weave conference

The Cultural Weave conference took place in the Down Arts Centre in 2009 followed by Cultural Weave 2 in the Island Arts Centre in 2010. CAF worked with partners ArtsEkta, Down Community Arts, Down Arts Centre and Island Arts Centre over two years to deliver the two conferences.

The aims of both events were:

- To profile minority ethnic arts to increase public awareness
- To raise awareness of minority ethnic integration and the challenges which minority ethnic communities face
- To provide a networking opportunity and platform to stimulate and develop ideas
- To provide a networking opportunity and impetus for partnership development
- To agree aims and objectives for a way forward

Speakers for both events came from across Ireland and the UK. The Cultural Weave strand had an emphasis on workshops and delegate participation. Cultural Weave included dance, drumming and lantern making workshops. Cultural Weave2 had a focus on networking, so a large part of the morning created an opportunity for networking. Both events included performances which illustrated the variety of minority ethnic community arts projects.

Speakers at both conferences reached a number of conclusions and the message conveyed:

- community arts can push boundaries and articulate strong messages
- community arts can make people feel secure to express themselves
- communication is key

Links and connections were made at both conferences which resulted in further projects being developed.

CAF worked with a number of other organisations to establish the Minority Ethnic Arts Forum (MEAF) – a group which would lobby for minority ethnic artists and organisations in the arts. The group was officially launched at Cultural Weave2. MEAF was originally a sub group within CAF and will continue with the Community Arts Partnership.

MEAF's mission is 'to enhance creative opportunities for artists from the minority ethnic communities'. The Forum aims to:

- Assist in the enhancement of a creative environment for minority ethnic arts
- Support minority ethnic artists
- Develop a forum that is fit for purpose

Artists' training programme

CAF ran a training programme between September and December 2009. The programme aimed to increase artists' skills in delivering community arts, ensuring a high standard of delivery within community arts.

A core group of nine participants attended the programme, with 25 artists engaged in total – participants could attend specific sessions or the whole programme. Sessions took place in venues across the region and three sessions were delivered in partnership with Visual Artists Ireland and Belfast Exposed. Students formed a peer support group as a result of the course. The standard of teaching was extremely high. This reflected the wealth of experience within the community arts sector.

"You are there as a guide and a facilitator, it is not your work; it is theirs. I think that is very hard for a lot of artists who aren't community artists, that haven't been trained and that haven't come through CAF. By CAF bringing in other trainers and other artists to work with us, I learnt so much about my technique but I also learnt a lot of other techniques and thought, 'I never even thought of that.'"

MEL WATSON



Heather Floyd and delegates at the Cultural Weave conference in 2009

CLOSURE, MERGER AND NEW BEGINNINGS

During 2010, the global economic crisis started to bite. In the UK, the newly elected Conservative and Liberal coalition delivered an emergency budget and comprehensive spending review, resulting in a swathe of cuts to public spending.

The voluntary and community sector throughout the UK braced itself for cuts, closures and mergers. Running throughout government rhetoric was a focus on frontline delivery. Umbrella and campaigning organisations appeared particularly vulnerable.

The ACNI annual core funding scheme Annual Support for Organisations Programme (ASOP) re-opened in 2010. In line with central government policy, ACNI made it clear that it would be prioritising service delivery organisations over umbrella groups.

In autumn 2010 ACNI representatives had a meeting with CAF. At this meeting, ACNI indicated that it would be seriously cutting its grant to CAF. The threat of a complete loss of ASOP funding and the subsequent closure of CAF was a distinct possibility as ASOP provided around two thirds of the organisation's income.

"However you describe the background, whether it's a recession or the banks, or an ideological position of the current government, there's been a massive shift from stakeholder, third-way politics that the Labour government had brought to public funding and community development, to where we are now, where only frontline services are being supported, and even then they're under threat."

CONOR SHIELDS

At that point, the board of CAF decided to explore the possibility of saving services through a merger. New Belfast was delivering workshop programmes to over 3,000 participants every year and felt it was in a strong position to seek funding for the year ahead.

New Belfast had enjoyed a very close working relationship with CAF since its inception. As outlined earlier in this publication, New Belfast had been developed by CAF more than a decade ago and shared premises in the very early days. The boards of New Belfast and CAF agreed to explore the possibility of a collaboration or merger and began negotiations with both boards and ACNI. The primary objective for both organisations was saving services that had taken years to develop.

"I have worked with both organisations over the years. I have found the advice, information and support given by the Community Arts Forum invaluable. Young travellers throughout Belfast have benefited from a variety of arts workshops provided by New Belfast Community Arts Initiative."

EIMEAR MAGUIRE

From October 2010, both organisations explored how they could protect the core services of CAF that had been the focal point for community arts in Northern Ireland for over 18 years. The stark alternative was the total loss of all CAF services and staff and a core component of the community arts sector in Northern Ireland being completely wiped out.

The organisations moved forward slowly with both boards communicating regularly with ACNI. Together, they developed a merger-plan that aimed to combine the strengths of CAF's advocacy, lobbying, training and information services with New Belfast's community arts workshop programmes.

The aim was to build on the legacy of both organisations' body of work. New Belfast and CAF applied to ASOP to allow the development of a merger. ACNI indicated its support by funding both CAF and New Belfast to bring the merger process forward.

Belfast City Council was quick to support this merger as well and agreed to collapse funding from CAF to New Belfast over the financial year 2011-2012. Lloyds TSB Foundation agreed to financially support the merger process. This included developing a report on the merger and facilitating a workshop for interested parties. Negotiations with other funders took place to allow funding to transfer from one organisation to the other.

For the first six months of 2011, CAF and New Belfast worked to close CAF and transfer CAF's lobbying, advocacy and information roles to New Belfast, which was to become the Community Arts Partnership.

On 24th June 2011, CAF held a closing party to celebrate the work of the organisation and the people who had been involved over the past 18 years. The event was emotional, sad, reflective but also celebratory, acknowledging the work which had been achieved on so many levels – project, lobbying, information and advocacy to name but a few.

On 27th June 2011 CAF held an Extraordinary General Meeting, which formally closed the organisation. CAF officially closed on 30th June 2011. Three valued members of staff lost their jobs and one member of staff, the information worker Caragh O'Donnell was transferred to the new organisation.

"I think the merger with CAF and New Belfast signifies another staging point, another era in the development of community arts. Community arts, in the last 18 years, has become a lot more sophisticated. There are umpteen universities that are doing community arts programmes in varieties of ways, whether they are talking about arts in context, or collaborative arts – they are all dealing with the issue of community arts. The professionalism of community arts has really come on in leaps and bounds as well. I think for us, what we want to do, primarily, in the immediate term is to secure those services that were hard won."

CONOR SHIELDS

Community Arts Partnership

These newly merged services will maintain and strengthen community arts provision across Northern Ireland and explore and forge new partnerships locally, nationally and internationally. We hope to be the touchstone for all matters relating to community arts and preserve the hard-won services that so many involved have taken for granted over the years.

Change is the force that community arts are built upon. Everyone involved in community arts believes in positive change and the new organisation is working hard to harness the optimistic and transformative energy of the creative arts for the benefit of all our society, especially those at the margins. From 2011-2012 we will begin the outworking of this process and we'll aim:

- to re-brand and re-launch as a regional service provider, Community Arts Partnership, amending the governing document to do so
- to provide the fullest possible range of community arts activity, experiences and practice through workshop programmes in a variety of art forms including visual arts, dance, drama, craft, sculpture, fashion, verbal arts and digital media
- to act as central point of contact for the community arts sector
- to maintain fora for training, learning and advocacy
- to provide best practice advice and guidance
- to fulfil an advocacy role for community arts sector
- to inform policy
- to attend and host conferences/seminars/symposia and disseminate learning
- to grow current research base, developing areas of work with rural communities, older adults, young people, artists

- to develop research models which are compellingly relevant and current
- to provide on-line digest of current news, issues and opportunities
- to provide and grow community arts weekly e-bulletin
- to invite partnerships with other agencies and fields of applied working, ie environmentalism, sustainable communities, social psychology, etc
- to instigate and support large-scale reviews of community arts across NI region via consultation
- to promote the profile and status of community arts through contact with councils, arts authorities, centres of learning, community groups and artists etc
- to seek new local, regional and international partnerships in community arts and develop initiatives with arts organisations, centres of learning and advocacy groups in Ireland, Britain and beyond

Community Arts Partnership staff team:

Director: Conor Shields

Business Development Manager: Francesca Biondi

Information Officer: Caragh O'Donnell

Information Officer (cover): Lucy Cochrane

Web/Graphic Designer: Steven Tunley

Project Co-ordinators: Sally Young, Clare McComish, Claire Concannon, Heather Douglas, Chelley McLear

The future

"We created a movement that hadn't been there. If you had a just cause, and you started saying it long enough, often enough, then everybody started to believe it, acknowledge the truth in it. And to the point where I can satisfactorily look back... look at the Belfast Telegraph on a Friday night and see a community arts officer post being advertised for Strabane or Newry or Armagh and go, 'Ah, we did that.'"

MARTIN LYNCH

"CAF made considerable gains in removing many of the barriers to access to the arts. CAF has left a proud legacy of enabling people to engage with and participate in the arts irrespective of their gender or age or social and economic background."

"The Community Arts Partnership is now poised to hit the ground running based on the strong track record the two organisations have built up in promoting access to the arts in communities which have faced so many great challenges over the years."

SEAN KELLY

"I do actually think that the new organisation has a massive opportunity to take elements of New Belfast as was, so maintaining the genuine community engagement and project delivery that New Belfast has but incorporating the best aspects of CAF and actually revitalising it, making it more relevant to the sector, making it more relevant to communities"

KAREN MCFARLANE

"I am really sorry to see CAF go, over the years it has provided me personally with employment, advice and a lot of time, encouragement, information and inspiration. I am heartened that the vision, drive and ambition for the community arts sector in Northern Ireland that CAF has demonstrated over the last number of years will not be totally lost and will hopefully take new shape in CAP. New Belfast holds a special place in my heart (yuk!) but it's true! Even though I may not have worked for the organisation with as much frequency as other artists over the years, all the projects I have done have been truly creative, experimental and collaborative. They have always trusted my skills and vision as an artist and have been confident enough to let the process go where it may. I have really valued and been grateful for that."

SHEELAGH COLCLOUGH

"After returning to Belfast after four and a half year's absence I had the privilege of working with New Belfast Community Arts Initiative and Community Arts Forum. Both organisations gave me the support and platform I needed to develop and deliver the skills I had learned and which I feel can play a very important role in the development not only of the individual but of the community as a whole."

FRA GUNN

"I'd like to see the new organisation support work within the different areas; to expand the understanding of community arts. The support structure has to adapt and keep relevant to changes. The achievements of the early days have now changed. There is a great sadness because CAF has been an important organisation and community arts is such an important movement. We will have to look at this as an opportunity to transform into what is needed for current circumstances. The cause hasn't finished but we have to ensure that this change strengthens the ability to do the work."

DAVID BOYD

"I think the big challenge for community arts going forward, is that it becomes better defined, more professional, that it avoids the silos and the jargon and that high level of specialisation that makes it actually inaccessible. There are good arguments for the very specific benefits that

it can deliver in very specific situations but it's also a way of thinking and working that is relevant across the board....No arts organisation in Northern Ireland with a public funding set-up can afford to not do some kind of outreach and I think it's important that the organisation that goes forward links into all of that, that it is just part of the entire continuum."

PATRICIA FREEDMAN

"what I hope the new organisation can do is to continue to work as a genuine, leading lobbyist, this provides a great opportunity to have a rethink and to look at how the sector can be engaged variously as, on all levels, from individual to organisations, so that everybody starts to get more involved in shaping and directing the future of community arts in Northern Ireland. New Belfast has been actively engaging with communities and individuals over the last ten years or so, it's perhaps going to be slightly easier to bring those people back on board and to excite them and ignite their passions about why this is important."

WILL CHAMBERLAIN

"It was in these early years of my career that I became aware of the Community Arts Forum (CAF). At this time in Belfast there were very few resources or advice centres for people like myself, who were working independently and at times felt quite isolated. CAF for me represented a support network, somewhere I could go, or get in touch with, at times when I needed information, advice or support. CAF continued their support of the artist by offering relevant training, such as working with people with disabilities, and a brilliant course called "artist to entrepreneur."

Since New Belfast arts initiative evolved over a decade ago, it has broadened the horizons that CAF established. It has given me the opportunity to work with artists using other creative mediums such as poetry, music, digital media and costume to achieve multi-dimensional results, and provided showcasing events. I always feel well prepared for any project I have engaged with through New Belfast as there is always a lot pre engagement discussion, planning for delivery and post project evaluation, the paper work keeps you in touch with all important aspects.

My only frustration with trying to evaluate the impact of New Belfast is how can you capture the magical moments, the confidence building, the skills learnt, the relationships forged, the memories retold and the occasional tear dropped during these projects. No camera, video or evaluation form will relay all of this."

ANNE QUAIL

"I think we can also reflect this bigger shift, where community art is now, it has real momentum. People aren't taken aback, there's no novelty now with community arts. People understand what community art is. What we have to do now is really take it to the next level, really improve the quality of the outcomes, improve the levels of participation and try and ensure that communities right across the North have access to the arts. If you look strategically at what a society needs against challenges like financial crises, recessions, social exclusion and division...whatever they are – less money shouldn't mean less creativity, because now more than ever, we need to be more creative. Culture is something that is embedded, it is the real currency of our lives ... and access to further our creative potential is a universal right. People should never lose sight of that. I will always be an advocate for community arts and the big thing for me is that I'm privileged to be in this position, to have the resources to do my work, to work with artists and communities, to engage in conversations about the value of creativity and the opportunities to share understanding and learning and defend the space for community arts to flourish, so that we can nurture that innate creativity, share it and drive that argument, to say that this is incredibly important to people. I love it."

CONOR SHIELDS

APPENDIX

List of contributors

Martin Lynch, Playwright and founder of CAF

David Boyd, Founder and Director of the Beat Initiative

Will Chamberlain, Former Chair of CAF and Director of Belfast Community Circus

Heather Floyd, Director of CAF 2001-2011

Pauline Hadaway, CAF Development Officer 1998-2000

Gerri Moriarty, Community Artist and Arts Consultant

Jo Egan, Artistic Director/Producer

Deirdre McBride, Chief Executive of the Belfast European Partnership Board;
(external evaluation of New Belfast, 2001)

Mel Watson, Community Artist and participant of the community arts training

Conor Shields, Director of Community Arts Partnership and former Director of
New Belfast Community Arts Initiative

John McCaffery, Co-ordinator, St Mary's Primary School, Belfast

Josh Schultz, Acting Director, New Belfast Community Arts Initiative

Grainne Kielty, Artist and former board member of CAF
and new board member of CAP

Nisha Tandon, Director, Artsektá

Patricia Freedman, Cathedral Quarter Development Manager and CAF
Conference Director 2005-2006

Orla McKeagney, Community Artist and Facilitator of A Woman's Part

Sadie Drake, Community leader with Denmark Street Community Centre

Karen Gowdy, Centre Manager, Hannahstown Community Centre

Sean Kelly, Director, Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival,

Eimear Maguire, Arts Development Worker, An Munia Tober

Karen McFarlane, former Chair of CAF and vice Chair of CAP

Sheelagh Colclough, Artist

Fra Gunn, Actor and Storyteller

Anne Quail, Artist

Brendan Murtagh Queen's University Belfast, School of planning, architecture
and civil engineering (External Evaluation 2006)

Acknowledgements: Community Arts Forum

Heartfelt thanks to an inspired, creative, enthusiastic, committed team of people between January 1993 and June 2011. This includes board members; staff; community artists; funders; community arts participants; community arts activists and a wide range of people and organisations CAF has worked with from urban planners to political representatives to architects to business people to civil servants.

The work of the Community Arts Forum was achieved by:

Staff and Volunteers

Martin Lynch, Kate Muldoon, Heather Floyd, Caragh O'Donnell, Ryan O'Reilly, Patricia McLoughlin, Sandy Hutchinson, Cathy Gallagher, Patrick McCoey, Tracy McAuley, Bernice McGurk, Robert Neill, Ali Fitzgibbon, Damian Mills, Maureen Harkins, Joan Reid, Pauline Hadaway, Chris Ball, Patricia Freedman, Niamh Flanagan, Nick Mack, Nikki Marks, David Boyd and Janice Kennedy.

CAF Board Chairs

Patrick McCoey, Tom Magill, Dave Hyndman, Will Chamberlain, Jo Egan, Gavin O'Connor, Carole Maguire, Nisha Tandon, Katrina Newell, Karen McFarlane.

CAF Board Members

Tom Magill, David Calvert, Marie McKee, David Boyd, Dennis Greig, Majella McParland, Anne McReynolds, Moya O'Hara, Anthea McWilliams, Damian Mills,

Joe Ferguson, Patricia Anderson, Susan Tomelty, Rene Greig, David Parkes, Janice Kennedy, Moyra Donaldson, Eddie Robinson, Dave Hyndman, Sean McKernan, Kathy O'Connor, Denise Green, Eilish Reilly, Jim Monaghan, Martin Quail, Alice McEvoy, Geraldine Mulherne, Helen Leckey, Gavin O'Connor, Jennifer Jordan, Petesy Burns, Sonya Whitefield, John Dean, Nathan Kripz, James King, George Newell, Jaci Wilde, Sydney Trotter, Avril Crawford, Rene Greig, Patricia Doherty, Josh Schultz, Joan Montgomery, Jo Egan, Frances McCandless, Mo McDevitt, Eddie Kerr, PHEME Brown, Deirdre Mackel, Helen Trew, Adam Turkington, Tom Kiernan, Conor Shields, Carole Maguire, Alison McCrudden, Margaret McKernan, Colin Hamilton, Kresanna Aigner, Katrina Newell, John McCormick, Grainne Kieley, Pat Bowen, Vicki Maguire, Eileen Branagh, Karen McFarlane, Kathy Trainor, Gemma Reid, Majella Flanagan, Orla Keown, Darren Ferguson, Fiona Murphy.

Artists

A huge thank you to community artists (too many to name!) who delivered many programmes for CAF over the years. Artists also played a vital role in seminars, training sessions, conferences, lobbying and networking.

Funders

A big thank you to all our various funders in particular our principal funder ACNI, Belfast City Council, SEUPB, Community Relations Council, Esme Fairbairn, Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, Lloyds TSB Foundation NI.

Acknowledgements: New Belfast Community Arts Initiative

Board and Consortium Members;

Martin Lynch, Joe McVey, John Dean (South Belfast Cultural Society), Noelle Ryan (Springhill Community House), Trish O'Kane (North Belfast Communities in Action), Syd Trotter (Greater East Belfast Community Arts Network), Natalie Hanna (Holy Trinity Youth Centre), Heather Floyd (Community Arts Forum), Joan Montgomery, (Arts For All), Helen Forsythe (Arts For All), Deirdre Robb (Arts For All), Lesley Wilson (Arts For All), Aodhan O Connaighle, Eimer Ni Mathuna (Cultúrlann Mc Adam Ó Fiaich), Rene Grieg (Shankill Community Arts Network), Kate Ingram (Open Arts), Sean Kelly (NICEM) Frank McGlone, Sean McCann, Katrina Newell (New Lodge Arts), Pauline Hadaway (Belfast Exposed), Gavin O'Connor (Wheelworks), Roz Small (Greater Shankill Partnership).

Staff

Lizzie Devlin, Joe Sheehy, Geoff Harden, Conor Shields, Josh Schultz, Michael Baker, Olivia Butler, Cora Wong, Coleen Coyle, Francesca Biondi, Steven Tunley, Julie-Anne Graham, Heather Douglas, Sally Young, Angela George, Shelley McLear, Ken Armstrong, Clare McComish, Claire Concannon, Tracy McVerry, Patricia Lavery, Mark Madden, Jane Lavery, Wendy Blemings, Rachael Campbell-Palmer.

Groups

123 House Family Centre, 174 Trust, ACSONI, Aisteoirí aon Drama, AL-NISA Women's Group (Muslim Women's Group), Amber House Community Development Agency, An Droichead, An Munia Tober, Aquinas Grammar School, Ard Carn Community Centre, Ardoyne Community Centre, Artability, Ballynafeigh Community Development Association, Ballysillan Community Forum, Base, Beacon Centre, Beechmount Community Centre, Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid, Belfast Islamic Centre, Belfast Jewish Community, Belfast Pride, Benview Community Centre, Blackie River Community Group, Bracken House, Bytes Project (Shankill Bytes), Bytes Project (Short Strand Bytes), Cedar Foundation, The Centre (Cregagh), Chapelfield Fold, Chinese Welfare Association, City Way Day Centre, Clarawood Over 50s Club, Cliftonville Community Centre, Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum, Cliftonville Parents Group, Club Eachtra, Concorde Community Centre, Cór Loch Lao, Cór Óg, Cornerhouse Centre, Corpus Christi Youth Centre, Cregagh Youth & Community Centre, Crumlin Community Group, Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich, Czech and Slovak Association, Dee Street Community Centre, Denmark Street Community Centre, Divis Community Centre, Donegall Pass Community Centre, Donegall Road Primary, Duncairn Community Centre, East Belfast Area Project BELB, East Belfast Neighbourhood Office, Edgumbe Training and Resource Centre, Empire Youth Club, Engage with Age NI, Everton Day Centre, Extending the Choice Club, Falls Women's Centre, FASA (Forum for Action on Substance Abuse), First Step Drop In Centre, FODDD, Fortwilliam Youth Centre, Frank Gillen Centre, Gay & Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland (GLYNI), Glen Road Community Centre, Glencairn Youth Initiative, Glenveagh Special School, Hammer Community Centre, Hannahstown Community Association, Harmony Court, Headway Belfast, Highfield Community Centre, Holy Family Youth Centre, Holy

Trinity Youth Centre , Horn Drive Community Centre, Indian Community Centre, Inverary Community Centre, Island Resource Centre, Knocknagoney Community Centre, Ledley Hall Boys & Girls Club, Lesbian Advocacy Services Initiative (LASI), Outburst Queer Arts Festival, Lesbian Line C/o Carafriend, Ligoniel Family Centre, Lord Street Residents Association, Lower Old Park Community Association, Lower Ormeau Residents Association – LORAG, Lower Shankill Area Project, MACs Advisory Service (Mulholland After Care), Markets Community Centre, Marrowbone Community Centre, Meannscioile Feirste, Mica Drive Social Education Centre, Mid-Skegoniel Community Group, Mornington Community Project, Morton Community Centre, Mount Vernon Community Development Forum, Multicultural Resource Centre, Muslim Family Association, National Deaf Children's Society, New Lodge Arts, Newcastle Arts Festival, Newhill Youth & Community Centre, Newington Day Centre, Newstart Education Project, North Belfast Day Centre, North Queen Street Community Centre, Nubia Youth Centre, Oasis Caring & Action Ltd, Ocean Trust Ireland, Olympia Community Centre, Open Arts Choir, Orchardville Training & Resource Centre, Outburst, PHAB NI, Polish Association NI, Polish Saturday School in Belfast, Public Achievement, Rainbow Project, Rathenraw Community Centre, RNIB Northern Ireland, Roslyn Street Youth Centre, Saints Youth Centre, Sandy Row Community Forum, Shankill & Glencairn Community Scheme, Shankill Day Centre, Shankill Road Youth Club, Shankill Women's Centre, Short Strand Community Centre , Skyway Club, South Belfast Area Project, South City Resource & Development Centre, Springhill Youth Club , Springmartin / Blackmountain Action Group, St Agnes Youth Club, St Gerard's Education & Resource Centre, St Peter's Youth Club, St. John Vianney, Star Neighbourhood Centre, Suffolk Community Forum, Suffolk Day Centre, Survivors of Trauma, Tar Anall, Taughmonagh Community Forum, Taughmonagh Primary School,

Townsend Street Social Outreach, Training for Life, Upper Ardoyne Community Partnership, Upper Ardoyne Youth Centre, Vine Centre, Walkway Community Centre, Whiterock Community Centre, Willowbank Youth Club, Woodlands Day Centre, Woodvale Community Centre.

Funders

Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Arts Council Northern Ireland Lottery, Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL) Belfast City Council (Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit, Good Relations Unit, Parks and Amenities Unit), Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin, Lloyds TSB Foundation NI, Belfast Local Strategy Partnership (Peace II, ERDF, ESF), Belfast European Partnership Board, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB), Joseph Rowntree Trust, Lagside Corporation, Belfast Regeneration Office, BBC Children In Need, City West Action, Better Belfast, Brighter Belfast, British Council, Co-Operation Ireland, Community Relations Council, Cresco Trust, Contested Universities, Antrim Borough Council, Castlereagh Borough Council, Down District Council, Down Lisburn Health and Social Services Trust, Enkalon Foundation, NI Housing Executive, NSPCC, Ortus, Southern Health and Social Services Trust.

Community Arts Partnership new board:

Joe McVey, Karen McFarlane, Martin Lynch, Eileen Branagh, Frank McGlone, Grainne Kiely, Sean McCann, Darren Ferguson, Trish O'Kane, Katrina Newell , Lesley Wilson. Company Secretary: Conor Shields.

New Belfast Community Arts Initiative trading as Community Arts Partnership
Charity number: XR 36570. Company limited by guarantee, number:
Northern Ireland NI 37645

A Coming of Age charts the development and legacy of the Community Arts Forum and New Belfast Community Arts Initiative. Whilst not attempting to be a history of community arts, the publication has aimed to provide an outline of some significant achievements and events in the sector over the years. As the two organisations merge to form the Community Arts Partnership, A Coming of Age weaves comment and opinion into a working manifesto for the future.

ISBN 978-0-9561360-5-3



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