

**DRAFT**



**Fr Myles**

**FOUNDER MEMBER & PRESIDENT**

Born 3rd November 1935 - Entered Eternal Life  
10th November 2024



**KAVANAGH HOUSE**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2025**

An Award Winning Organisation



## Chairpersons Address

### Welcome everyone...

**It's a real pleasure to welcome you all to the Ardoyne Association's Annual General Meeting for 2025. I'm especially glad to see such a strong turnout from familiar faces to new friends and I'd like to extend a warm welcome to our invited guests and valued funders who continue to support the work we do.**

I'd like to welcome you all to the new ABC Hub – 10 years in the making and I want to Thank ABC Trust and ABC Ltd for hosting us here today, please take time to tour the building that we hope will become a hive a major activity for the area.

This year has been marked by a deep and personal loss for our community. We said goodbye to Fr. Myles Kavanagh, one of our founding members a visionary and a pillar of peace and service in this area. His impact can't be summed up in words, his decades of dedication, compassion, and commitment to building a better future touched countless lives, not only here in Ardoyne but across Belfast. His legacy lives on in the many projects he helped to create, and in the values that continue to shape our organisation.

As you'll hear in the reports ahead, it's been one of our busiest and most productive years to date.

Our commitment to working closely with the statutory agencies that serve our community remains at the heart of what we do, and we've continued to play an active role in shaping local development and responding to community need.

We are proud to be recognised as an award-winning organisation, and that recognition belongs to all of us. It reflects the strength of our shared efforts and the spirit of partnership that runs through everything we do.

I want to take this moment to sincerely thank my fellow Board members, our dedicated Street Representatives, our hardworking staff team, and our incredible volunteers. Your energy, compassion, and commitment make all the difference. It's because of you that we continue to grow, to lead, and to serve.

Looking ahead, I feel optimistic and hopeful. With the development of our new 10-year strategic plan, we have a chance to build on all we've achieved and shape a future that reflects the needs, hopes, and ambitions of this community.

**Thank you for being here with us today,**

**Marian Kane**  
Chairperson

**Our aim is to facilitate the economic and social up-liftment of the people of Ardoyne.**

**Ardoyne Association**

# House Manager Report



Elaine Burns  
House Manager

## Key Services & Achievements

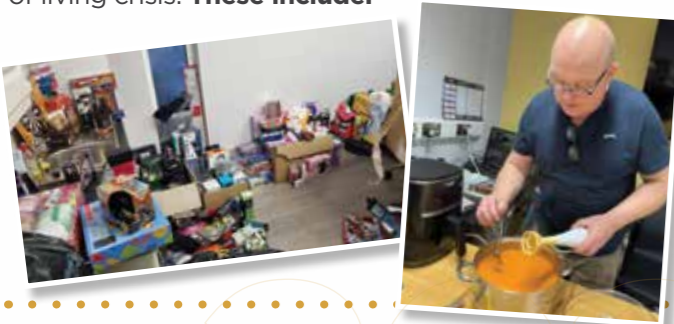
This year has been one of great success and deep sadness. While we proudly added more awards to our name, we also mourn the loss of one of our founding figures, Fr. Myles, whose vision and dedication shaped much of what we do. His legacy continues to guide our work.

At the heart of our organisation is the Advice Service, which remains the backbone of our operations. From this core, we've expanded our focus to training, employability, and community support, empowering residents and service users to engage, grow, and improve their circumstances, whether through formal qualifications or informal skill-building.

In 2025, we continued to deliver a range of targeted programmes addressing the harsh impact of the cost of living crisis. **These include:**

- ✓ **Community Larder**
- ✓ **Social Supermarket**
- ✓ **Nourish the Nation**
- ✓ **Christmas with Dignity Campaign**

These services continue to reach individuals and families under severe financial pressure. This report outlines our full scope of work, including our Community Engagement Strategy and ongoing collaboration with statutory agencies through our Housing and Environmental Group. Together, we address real-time issues affecting the community, from housing and environment to accessing other public services.



## New in 2025

### Benefit Care Programme

We proudly launched the Benefit Care Programme in partnership with The People's Kitchen and Ardoyne Shankill Health Partnership. Through this, we:

- ✓ **Delivered weekly outreach Advice Clinics**
- ✓ **Engaged with Older People's groups to help maximise income**
- ✓ **Partnered with HHD Solicitors to offer support on Wills, Trusts, EPAs, and more**

This programme had a remarkable impact, and we are actively seeking funding to secure a dedicated Advice Worker for older residents.:



Ashton Older Peoples Group and the Residents of Holyrood House.

## Advice & Training Excellence

Our Advisors, through the North Belfast Advice Partnership completed:

- ✓ **Asylum and Refugee Status training**
- ✓ **Refresher courses on Universal Credit changes**
- ✓ **Quality Standards training**

Our Universal Credit Clinic remains highly regarded. Clients travel from across Belfast and beyond for support on claims, discretionary support, housing costs and rates. We continue to receive exceptional feedback from service users.

We also continue our partnership with Ulster University Law School, providing two law students per year with on-the-ground placement opportunities.

## Advice & Training Excellence

Our Community Contact Workers have been deeply involved in:

- ✓ **Housing and environmental concerns**
- ✓ **Community surveys**
- ✓ **Supporting our Training Officer**

### Programmes included:

- ✓ **Welfare Rights**
- ✓ **Gardening and Biodiversity**
- ✓ **Infant Mental Health**
- ✓ **ADHD Awareness**
- ✓ **First Aid and Defibrillator training**
- ✓ **Women's Personal Development and Stress Management**
- ✓ **School support for children**

We also led three major advocacy campaigns that challenged government proposals, including the rollback of cuts to Disability and Sickness Benefits and changes to the Welfare Supplementary Payment Scheme.

Our Pension Credit outreach campaign helped many older residents access unclaimed entitlements, and we distributed Winter Warm Packs to the most vulnerable.

We also formally responded to the NIHE Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy (2024-2029).

## Collaborative Housing Work

Our weekly NIHE Clinic provides direct access to Patch Managers. In 2025, we also began working with Housing Solutions to advocate on claimants applications and improve their outcomes. This collaboration is in its early stages but shows strong potential.

We also deliver an annual training session for newly qualified Social Workers on understanding the benefits system and its complexities a vital part of preparing frontline professionals.

## Celebrating Success & Community Pride

We proudly supported the Ard Eoin Senior Ladies Gaelic Football Team by sponsoring their new jerseys, promoting women in sport.

We held our Annual Awards Celebration to recognise everyone who completed training with us.

We supported the ABC Trust in developing an £8M Health and Leisure Hub, and we offered meeting space and admin support to the ArdBone Festival.

## Awards and Recognition

- ✓ **North Belfast Community Leadership Award**
- ✓ **Lifetime Achievement Award – Chairperson**
- ✓ **Community Award – Holy Communion Project**
- ✓ **Quiet Peace Builders Award – Elaine Burns**

This year has tested us, inspired us, and reminded us of the strength that comes from community-led action. We thank everyone who contributed to another year of meaningful work and we look ahead with focus and determination.



# Advice Service Report

## Advice Statistics 2024-25



Total cases managed: **2,955**

**1,099**  
Benefit claims supported

**744**  
Universal Credit Clinic clients  
(managed migration, fresh claims, or ongoing IT support)

Income generated through the Advice Service:

**£4,779,455.97**

## North Belfast Advice Partnership

As members of NBAP, we collectively work to deliver an effective Advice Service across North Belfast.

**15,091** Client Issues  
**5,766** Number of Clients

Benefit Maximization  
**£12,000,000**

Can I talk to anyone about my claim?

Yes... Let's make a plan together

## Debt Action

Part of regional debt advice service, co-ordinated by Advice NI

During our Debt Workers Training period they dealt with 22 clients and helped them negotiate debts totalling **£185,234**.

**Family Finances** - funded by Belfast Trust through the Family Support Programme, our worker supported 85 clients, and helped them negotiate debts totalling **£503,136**.

**Money Workshops** - funded by Newington Housing Association (pruck) and CRC through North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme.

Kathy delivered 20 workshops, with 139 attendees. Venues included Vine Centre/Ardoyne (through Virtual Larder),

The Pantry at Ashton Community Trust, Lower Shankill Community Association (PANG Project), Twaddell Women's Group and Sailortown Regeneration Group.



## Additional Support Programmes

### Community Larder

1236 Adults and 952 Children supported in the period April 2024 - March 2025.

### Universal Credit Clinic

744 individuals received vital support to:

- ✓ Make or migrate to a Universal Credit (UC) claim.
- ✓ Maintain existing UC claims.
- ✓ Claim housing costs, including Rates.
- ✓ Apply for Discretionary Support.
- ✓ Apply for Carer's Allowance.
- ✓ Apply for New Style ESA.

### Nourish The Nation

In the summer of 2024, we supported 50 primary school children and their families. This much-appreciated project, provided 8 weeks of nutritious lunches and weekly activity packs to keep the children engaged over the holiday period. We also gave each child a "return to school" pack and a free haircut, ensuring they had the essentials and the confidence to start the new school year ready to learn.

A further 50 children received Returned to School packs as part of an NIHE funded Programme.



### Social Supermarket

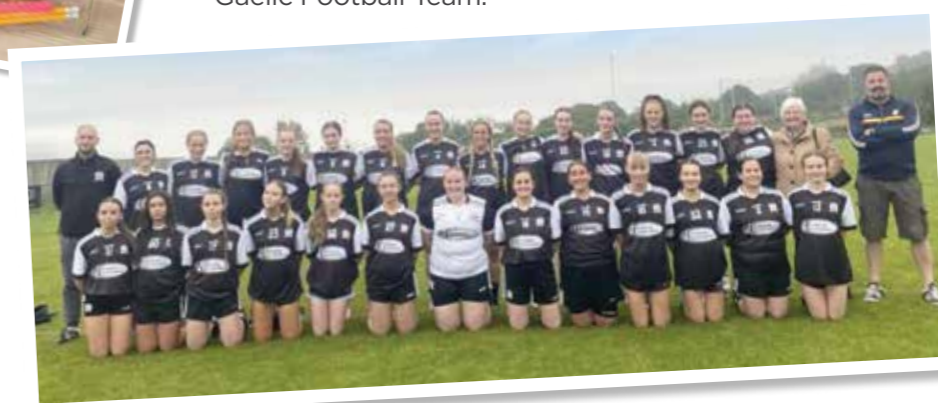
We supported Households Supported: **215 Households**  
Adults: **300** - Children: **207**

This service was especially important for those migrating to, or making, a new Universal Credit claim, who face the punitive 5-week wait before receiving any payment. Funded by BCC, this is a vital service that helps families through an extremely difficult time.



### Supporting Ladies in Sport

We all know the importance and health benefits of women participating in sport. With dedicated funding, we encouraged young girls to get involved and were delighted to sponsor the Ard Eoin GAA Senior Ladies Gaelic Football Team.



## Additional Support Programmes



### Holy Communion Project

We supported 12 children, with the cost-of-living crisis being a key factor in the need for this project.

We found that children with neurodivergent needs benefited the most, as many struggle with large crowds in stores or sensory challenges such as certain textures. This service allowed them to select items and take them home, giving them the time and comfort to prepare at their own pace.



### Quiet Peace Builders Awards 2024

Elaine Burns - 1 of 25 individuals from across the North receiving their Quiet Peace Builders Awards 2024



### North Belfast Community Leadership Award Our Holy Communion Project



**North Belfast Community Leadership Awards**  
Marian Kane receiving her lifetime achievement award from Flax Trust's Sr Mary Turley.



**Highly Commended Project, "yes to the dress and cute to the suit" Holy Communion Project**  
James McGinn presenting, Mary O'Hanlon, Chrissy McCabe and Elaine Burns with their award.

## Community Contact & Engagement

### March 2024 to April 2025

Over this period, we've had two Community Contact & Engagement workers in place.

Working closely with our Street Reps, volunteers, statutory agencies, and housing bodies, their role is about listening, connecting, and responding. It's a two-way process building relationships, sharing information, and making sure the real needs and voices of the community are at the center of what we do.



### 1: Community Renewal - Improve the quality of life:

#### At a Glance

- ✓ 2,335+ volunteer hours given back to the community.
- ✓ 75 families supported with practical packs. (dog bags, winter warm packs, clothing).
- ✓ Dozens of Street Reps trained, engaged, and active in local projects.

#### Volunteering & Engagement

- ✓ 34 volunteers - Women's Personal Development.
- ✓ 40 Street Reps - Race & Community Relations.
- ✓ 50 Reps - Distributed UC & Larder leaflets/posters.
- ✓ 57 volunteers - Consulted residents for input to AGM.

#### Community Action

- ✓ 30 Families - Community walk with 5 local charities.
- ✓ 40 Street Reps - Tackled weeds, hedges, and trip hazards.
- ✓ 75 Residents - Collected packs of dog bags.

#### Training & Support

- ✓ 50 Reps - Attended drop-in clinics/workshops to upskill.
- ✓ 8 Volunteers - Ran Holy Communion freecycle project.



#### Partnership & Housing

- ✓ 6 Meetings - Local housing & environment meetings with agencies and residents
- ✓ Strong collaboration across community, statutory, and voluntary sectors

#### Overall Impact

- ✓ 2,335+ volunteer hours powering local services.
- ✓ Stronger cross-community engagement.
- ✓ Practical supports tackling real everyday needs.
- ✓ Building confidence, skills, and stronger neighbourhood connection.

#### Short stories behind the stats:

At our Walk & Talk event, 30 families visited five local charities within walking distance. The day was a great success, with new families finding it especially helpful to learn about local support and starting to engage more with our work. The feedback was very positive - 100% said their knowledge of local services improved, 67% met new people, 80% felt safe walking and learning, 64% said it lifted their mood, and 95% found the time meaningful. Issues of cross-community engagement, legacy, and mental health were also brought forward in the discussions.

## 2: Economic Renewal - To move into a pathway to employment.

A Training Needs Analysis was conducted with Street Reps/Volunteers to ascertain what educational/training interests the community may have. This then influenced the trajectory of the educational training calendar.

## 3: Social renewal - Safe and secure neighbourhoods

- ✓ Engaged in 2 community safety projects.
- ✓ Supported through 2 crime prevention initiatives.
- ✓ Street reps reported ASB cases, with 3 specific Meeting on ASB issues.
- ✓ Adults consulted over community street issues, rise in rats infestation, dog fouling, drug abuse.
- ✓ Houses targeted on community survey 90 detailed responses received on social issues, community wellbeing and safety.
- ✓ Better community coordination between community, statutory bodies, youth providers, Belfast City Council, PSNI, DOJ and Housing Associations.

### Short stories behind the stats:

Jennifer an elderly woman was verbally abused on the street and at her home by two young boys indulging in anti-social behaviour. The abuse escalated to throwing stones at the glass in her front door and at her windows. The woman was very stressed and vulnerable as the abuse lasted over 3 weeks. The local school and community worked together to diffuse the situation by using restorative justice methods to challenge the young boy's behaviour and raise awareness of taking responsibility and consequences. The situation has calmed down but is still being monitored by street reps, and school staff.



## Training Programme Report

### March 2024 to March 2025

**We have been able to diversify our pathway to employment through introducing training on Infant Mental Health with Belfast Met. We have participants doing introduction and Level 2, this will help to prepare people to work as future special needs classroom assistants.**

This will allow parents with Autistic children to work while their child is in school and be available during school holidays. As always our training has been open to all communities and following

the T-Buc principles. Participants came from Ballysillan, Ligoniel, Ballygomartin, Shankill Road, Ardoyne, Old Park, Marrowbone and beyond. Quotations from participants; "Very informative with valuable information in a relaxed and fun learning environment"; "Training was energetic and joyful, Thanks so much"; "I will apply this training in everyday life, along with help with own children"; "Brilliant, very interesting to understand all the background"; "Absolutely amazing".

### At a Glance

- ✓ Over 300 people engaged with Training.
- ✓ 100% that they have been treated well while taking part in the projects.
- ✓ 100% agreed that they have benefitted from taking part in the projects.
- ✓ 51% felt that the training brightened their mood and was good for their mental health and wellbeing
- ✓ 77% that they met new people
- ✓ 94% felt it was very useful



# Training Programme Report

## Infant Mental Training with Belfast Met

- ✓ 47 participants achieved Certificates & Level 2 in Infant Mental Health with Belfast Met.
- ✓ 54 completed Money Management training.
- ✓ 40 joined Macramé craft, including an intergenerational project with Ardoyne Youth Club & Holy Rood House.
- ✓ 61 took part in Environmental & Gardening training.
- ✓ 14 completed Driving Theory training.
- ✓ 41 women achieved certificates in Connections Link Life (Emotional Health, Suicide Prevention, Self-Care & Stress Management).
- ✓ 21 men completed Manifest Training (Mind Fitness & Emotional Wellbeing).
- ✓ 10 staff/volunteers completed Housing Rights training.
- ✓ 13 staff trained in Suicide Awareness.
- ✓ 3 participants completed Level 2 Food & Hygiene.



# Minutes of AGM 2024

Thursday 24th September 2024  
Venue: Ardoyne Community Centre

## Welcome Address

Chairperson Marian Kane welcomed attendees, guests, and funders.

Noted Association's approaching 50th year of service.

### Secretary & Annual Report Launched

Minutes of 2023 AGM approved as accurate.

Proposed: Paul Carson; Seconded: Claire Kelly.

Signed off by Chair.

### Board Elections

Nuala Kane stepped down.

Paul Shevlin elected (proposed: Marian Kane, seconded: Una McRoberts).

### Policies

43 organisational policies reviewed in line with legislation and signed off.

### Keynote Speakers

Dr Ciara Fitzpatrick (UU School of Law / Board Member): Welfare reform mitigations & Cliff Edge Coalition.

Dr Michael Liggett (ABC Trust): Health inequalities in North Belfast & update on ABC Centre.

**Guest Speaker:** Nuala McKenna (DFC) – update on advice/anti-poverty strategy; presented OCN certificates to Trainees

### Updates & Q&A

Kerr Properties: Delay in Flax Centre demolition due to utilities.

Flax Street Gates: DOJ confirm operational with Brookfield Mill development.

GP Services: Discussion on future facilities (day centre, therapies, counselling).

### Any Other Business

None.

Closing Remarks

Chair thanked all funders, guest speakers, Elaine and her team, and all attendees.

Encouraged certificate recipients to volunteer with the Association.

Reflected on 2023/24 work under theme “2025 Welfare Shift: Concerns for Supplementary Payments”.

Thanks given to Board, Street Reps, staff, and volunteers.



**(L-R) Guest Speakers:** Dr Michael Liggett and Dr Ciara Fitzpatrick alongside Board Members Gemma Mulholland, Marie Coleman, Marian Kane, Una McRoberts and Centre Manager Elaine Burns



# THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS.

We couldn't do the our  
work without their help



**Housing  
Executive**





## BOARD MEMBERS

**Marian Kane** - *Chairperson*

**Una McRoberts** - *Secretary*

**Marie Coleman** - *Treasurer*

**Paul Shevlin**

**Joe Blair**

**Marie O'Neill**

**Dr Ciara Fitzpatrick**

**Tammi Lee Stewart**

**Gemma Mulholland**

**Orla McCallin**

## STAFF MEMBERS

**Elaine Burns**  
Centre Manager and  
Advice Worker

**Kevin McGarry**  
Training and Community  
Development Co Ordinator

**Claire Kelly**  
Finance Officer and  
Advice Worker

**Catherine Ferrin**  
Community Contact and  
Engagement Worker

**Deirbhile Johnston**  
Community Contact  
and Engagement Worker

**Conal Matthews**  
Community Contact and  
Engagement Worker

**Laura Ward**  
Advice Worker

**Niamh Burns**  
Advice Worker

**Shauna Gargan**  
Advice Worker

**Emma Mc Meekin**  
Advice Worker

## VOLUNTEERS

**Alisha Varndell**  
Community Larder Volunteer

**Jennifer McGlinchey**  
Community Larder Volunteer

**Debbie Hamill**  
Volunteer

**Maeve Murphy**  
Advice Volunteer

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