



# 2024-25 ANNUAL REPORT

Community  
Intercultural  
Programme



Reg. Charity No NIC102018



# COMMUNITY INTERCULTURAL PROGRAMME

## Contact Details

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Reg. Charity No NIC102018



## MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Andrew McCreery – Chairperson  
Stephen Smith – Vice Chairperson  
Gordon Woolsey – Secretary  
Laura Wheatley – Treasurer  
Paul Burrows  
Alfredo Monterio  
Elizabete Gomes  
Anastazja Wisniewska  
Richie Smith

## MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES, FORUMS & GROUPS

- ABC Community Network
- Educational Authority Local Youth Advisory Group
- Locality Planning Group
- Stronger Together Network

## PARTNERS IN PROJECT DELIVERY

- Children in Northern Ireland
- Scotch Street Youth and Community Centre
- Stronger Together Network
- Portadown Youth Providers Forum
- Healthy Kidz

## ACCOUNTANT

S D Brown & Company  
25-27 Edward Street  
Portadown BT62 3NE

## SOLICITOR

T.D. Gibson & Co Ltd  
107 Church Street  
Portadown BT62 3DD





# ANNUAL REPORT

The trustees have pleasure in presenting their report and the consolidated financial statement of the charitable group CIP for the year ended 31 March 2025.

CIP, (Community Intercultural Programme) came into existence in Sept 2006 in response to the emerging needs of the Ethnic Communities in the region of Craigavon. CIP is committed to supporting people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, enabling them to fully integrate into and participate in an equitable society which represents difference and celebrates diversity

## VISION

**CIP's vision is of an inclusive society across the ABC Council area, which contributes to social cohesion and ensures equality for all.**

## VALUES

- CIP actively promotes equality, values diversity and opposes discrimination in all its forms.
- CIP is an independent association, is non party political and is committed to an active anti- sectarian approach to its work
- CIP is committed to collective action informed by people's experiences and an analysis of their circumstances. Therefore CIP's primary method of operation is supporting and encouraging community action amongst disadvantaged communities.
- CIP will conduct its affairs in an honest, open, transparent and accountable way to its members.
- CIP values its volunteers as a key resource of the organisation.
- CIP will strive to represent the interests of all ethnic communities without 'fear or favour'
- CIP will strive for excellence in all we do in order to provide high quality and effective leadership and support.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

**CIP carried out its operation under the following strategic aims and associated objectives:**

- Continued evolution of effective and efficient internal organisational systems and structures
- Training and Capacity Building
- Deliver an effective and comprehensive Support Service
- Develop family support programmes that focus on the emotional well-being of the whole family
- Expand the level of social inclusion and integration services and culturally appropriate programmes for BME Youth and Young Adults
- Promote Good Relations between diverse communities
- Raise Awareness of, Reduce and Prevent the level of exploitation experienced by vulnerable people.

## PUBLIC BENEFITS

**In ensuring that the activities of CIP benefit the general public, all our activities are related to one or more of the following charitable objectives;**

- The advancement of citizenship through the promotion of voluntary activity using a community development approach
- The prevention and relief of poverty by activities encouraging the participation of the most disadvantaged and excluded groups in our programmes
- The advancement of education by providing training to groups and individuals
- The advancement of human rights through work designed to promote reconciliation and resolve conflict and the promotion of religious or racial harmony or equality and diversity

**In order to meet its objectives, CIP provides a series of services benefiting the local community. Such services include:**



**Advice, Information and signposting** – this programme of work provides a quality face-to-face service to BME clients across the ABC Council area with the aim of advancing citizenship, community development and human rights.



**Family Support** – this programme seeks to empower BME families, provide direct focused support and improve access to third party services that reduces social inclusion and relieves poverty.



**Youth Empowerment** – this programme aims to provide a range of services that promotes active citizenship, personal development, cultural diversity and a sense of belonging.





# COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

*It is with great pride that I present the Community Intercultural Programme Annual Report for 2024–25. This year has been one of both achievement and transition for CIP, reflecting the organisation's continued resilience, adaptability and commitment to supporting diverse communities across the area.*

*Despite ongoing pressures on funding and resources, CIP staff and volunteers have once again demonstrated professionalism, dedication and compassion in delivering high-quality advice, family support, youth and community programmes. The breadth and depth of engagement outlined in this report is testament to their ability to respond to complex and evolving needs, while remaining firmly rooted in values of inclusion, equality and respect. This reporting period also marks a significant year of transition for the organisation, with changes in both the Chairperson and Chief Executive roles. I wish to place on record our thanks to both Stephen Smith & Paul Burrows for their significant contribution to these roles since the organisation's inception and are delighted that they will continue to contribute to the organisation in various roles. Our sincere thanks to those who have provided leadership during this period of change, ensuring continuity, stability and a clear sense of purpose. Transitions bring both challenge and opportunity, and I am confident that CIP has navigated this period with care, integrity and foresight.*

*I am particularly pleased to welcome new members to the Management Committee during the year. They bring with them a diverse range of skills, perspectives and lived experience which strongly complement the existing expertise of the Board. This blend of continuity and renewal strengthens our governance and positions CIP well as we look ahead to developing our next strategic phase.*

*In a period marked by wider social, economic and community uncertainty, CIP has continued to provide trusted leadership, stability and reassurance for both service users and partner organisations. By maintaining consistent, accessible services and a visible community presence, CIP has offered continuity at a time when many individuals and families were experiencing change, insecurity and isolation. This steady approach has enabled CIP not only to sustain essential support, but to adapt confidently to emerging needs and continue acting as a reliable anchor within the community.*

*CIP continues to be a vibrant, inclusive hub, bringing together individuals, families and communities through shared spaces, trusted services and meaningful relationships. This work would not be possible without the continued commitment of our staff and volunteers, nor without the vital support of our funders and partners. We are deeply grateful for their confidence in CIP and their ongoing investment in our work and the communities we serve. As a Management Committee, we believe CIP is well placed to respond to both current and emerging challenges facing our local communities, and we remain committed to supporting the organisation to grow, adapt and thrive in the years ahead.*

**Andrew McCreery**

# OVERVIEW OF PROJECTS

## Advice & Advocacy Service

Central to CIP activities has been its 'face-to-face' advice service which not only benefits primarily Polish, Bulgarian, African Portuguese and Romanian communities but has extended its scope to assist individuals from 14 different language groups. The service is supported by The Executive Office.

**1,013 clients were supported via  
2,769 one-to-one sessions.**

**592 people were supported with their  
EU Settlement Status**

**13 information sessions attended  
by 147 participants**

**84 children were referred to children  
and young people activities**

## Poverty issues

As newcomer families encounter high levels of deprivation, CIP remained vigilant regarding community needs and responded to the individual challenges providing direct intervention to families in need and also providing third-party assistance and signposting to families. This included the provision of food vouchers through Red Cross funding, food packs supplied by Fareshare and local companies, and warm packs provided by local council, the Public Health Authority and charitable groups.





# REFLECTIONS FROM STAFF



## **Bruno Fortes (Portuguese Support Worker)**

My experience working with the Portuguese and African community has been both rewarding and insightful. One of the most positive aspects has been the opportunity to serve and support people in areas where help is most needed. Many individuals and families face daily challenges, and being able to offer guidance, reassurance,

and practical assistance has been deeply fulfilling. This work has also allowed me to develop strong connections and meaningful relationships within the community, built on trust, empathy, and shared experiences.

Through engagement and outreach, I have witnessed the resilience and generosity that exists within the community. When given the opportunity, people are eager to support one another and contribute positively to wider society. These relationships have strengthened my understanding of cultural diversity and the importance of inclusive community spaces.

However, there are significant challenges. Language barriers remain one of the main obstacles, particularly for adults and senior members of the community. This is often compounded by a lack of knowledge about how social benefits, public services, and legal systems operate in Northern Ireland. As a result, many individuals experience isolation, limited access to support, and difficulty integrating into broader society. While the adult and senior population often struggle with integration, the youth appear more settled. A significant number were born in Ireland and demonstrate greater confidence, language skills, and social integration.

The vision for the future is to promote integration, reduce isolation, and empower the Portuguese and African community to excel and thrive in Northern Ireland through education, advocacy, and inclusive opportunities.

## **Veronica Dempsey (Romanian Support Worker)**

Working with Romanian Community has always been an extreme challenge taking in consideration the gaps between culture, laws, traditions between UK and Romania.

The focus is empowering the people to understand their rights and challenge unfair treatment. The priority this year was the legality of being in this country: immigration advice, applications.



### **There are other aspects of our work:**

- Help with looking for schools, work, youth clubs, childcare
- Apply for driving licenses, passports, birth certificates, Hagan stamp, benefits, insurances, mortgages, housing, grants, National Insurance Number
- Signpost to solicitors, accountants, churches, organisations, police
- Organising weddings, funerals, community events
- Organising bookings for Itinerant Consulate
- Booking hospital appointments, dentist, opticians, private care, vets, flights, boats
- Dealing with discrimination, crime, homeless
- Promote cultural understanding for all government bodies
- Explain tax codes, phone HMRC
- Helping understanding and paying bills





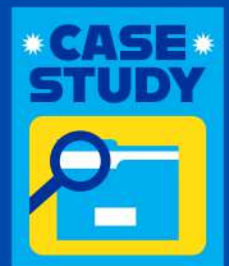
## Wojciech Dylewicz (Polish Support Worker)

As in the previous years, there has been a growing number of clients struggling with disabilities. They need assistance with advice, applying for incapacity benefits. They are usually in the age over 40, living alone and do not speak English. It happens rarely, that they receive help from friends. Therefore, I assist them with benefits application process, inform about qualifying criteria etc. It is essential to help clients gather necessary medical evidence, contacting relevant health services. Similar issues relate to the pensioners. There is a growing number of our clients reaching retirement. They need support with providing information, applying for foreign pension through the UK pension service and referring the clients to the accountants who could help them with self-assessment (due to foreign income). That is a major obstacle for that group.

Current benefit system requires basic IT skills, using smartphones. The group I am dealing with needs substantial help with setting up online, benefit accounts, and guiding the clients how to use the online service.

Still, there is a tendency within Polish community to leave the UK. There are clients closing private pensions accounts, ending employment and accessing the HMRC online accounts for future pension purposes.

*The couple living in Housing Executive accommodation. The husband has been disabled and wife looking after him. They have been using CIP service regularly due to language barrier. The husband was awarded foreign state pension and required assistance with adjusting correctly UK benefits. Sadly, in that time, he was diagnosed with cancer. He required more care and assistance with daily functioning. The couple reached pension age and needed support with moving from Employment and Support Allowance to Pension Credit. Because of poor health condition they could not attend appointments at CIP office. Therefore, a lot of work was done over the phone or online. On some occasions I was visiting the family at their home when contacting with benefits offices or completing forms. After months of hard work, the couple was awarded all benefits and payments were backdated. That gave them at least stable financial situation. The client responded well to cancer treatment, and he can manage his basic needs with some help.*



## Polina Malcheva (Bulgarian Support Worker)

I advocate for members of the Bulgarian and Bulgarian Roma communities by supporting them with housing challenges, poverty-related issues, access to education, and day-to-day practical needs. My work also includes providing guidance on immigration matters and helping individuals navigate complex systems so they can settle, integrate, and thrive. I aim to amplify community voices and ensure fair access to services and opportunities. My services are still in high demand as a very small percentage have the capacity and confidence to deal with day-to-day issues on their own.





## PROGRAMME IN NUMBERS

PROGRAMME	ATTENDEES	CONTACT HOURS	SESSIONS
Education Authority	251	7187	84
Gets Active	102	2502	28
Youth	98	2368	35
ORBIT	89	1244	36

## STAFF



**BETHANY EBRON**

Programme  
Manager



**MILENA TOPOLSKA**

Youth Leader



**STEVE GATES**

Youth Leader



**LAURA WHEATLY**

Youth Leader





# GETS ACTIVE PROVISION

## Spring Gets Active 2024

This program engaged 55 children and 18 peer mentors in a variety of educational and recreational activities. Younger children (P1-P4) enjoyed child-led play and energetic relay games with Healthy Kidz, while older participants (P5-P7) completed a Mini Medics first aid course, earning certificates in life-saving skills. The was also featured a magic show, an Easter egg hunt, and a guided nature walk through the Peatlands Park Bog Garden.



## Summer Gets Active 2024

The summer scheme centred on a "Roald Dahl" theme, involving 90 children in activities such as bushcraft, digital art, and talent show performances. A dedicated team of 20 young volunteers supported the 10-week program, which included a community drama performance and healthy cooking workshops with Klean Kitchen. The program concluded with a large Family Day attended by 175 people, featuring a climbing wall, inflatable games, and health checks, supported by funding from ALMAC.

## Autumn Gets Active 2024

During the autumn break, 65 children and 19 peer mentors participated in sports and skill-building sessions at the South Lakes Leisure Centre with Healthy Kidz coaches. The program emphasized nutrition, providing homemade meals like vegetable soup and chicken curry, while Helping Hands Community Outreach provided fresh local produce for families to take home. The scheme also included a community trip to the Craigavon Cinema to see The Wild Robot.

## Christmas Gets Active 2024

Christmas focused on community celebration and volunteer recognition through the Oasis project finale. Families attended an interactive showcase where peer mentors shared their experiences and developed public speaking skills. To encourage family bonding during the break, the program gifted cinema vouchers to all Afterschool Club and "Gets Active" participants, allowing families to enjoy quality time together.







## Afterschool Club (Year-Round)

The Afterschool Club delivers 34 sessions annually, supporting 55 children and 7 peer mentors every Tuesday. The curriculum covers a wide range of developmental areas, including STEM (marshmallow towers and space workshops), creative arts, and mental health activities like stress-ball making. Physical activity is a core component through weekly Healthy Kidz sessions, and the club maintains a strong focus on nutrition and child-led "YES Days."

## Baseball Fusion Mid-Term Camp

Our Baseball Fusion Mid-Term Camp ran from 10th–14th February at Lismore College. During the first two days, 20 secondary-school Young Leaders took part in baseball training delivered in partnership with Healthy Kidz and Emerald Diamond Baseball. Sessions were led by Joe Cosgrove, an active American Baseball player, who focused on developing participants' playing skills alongside leadership and delivery techniques to prepare them to work with younger children.

During the final three days, the program expanded to include 46 primary-school children. Young Leaders supported coaches to deliver structured baseball drills, fun skill-based games and match play. This model provided younger participants with a positive introduction to baseball while enabling Young Leaders to gain practical leadership experience in a supportive, supervised environment.



## Gets Active Youth Advisory Group

This is a regional YAG lead by Children in Northern Ireland. 24/25 was a big year for the YAG and members done some impactful work. Meeting monthly to shape the holiday programmes, discuss key

challenges faced by young people, and develop tools to engage policymakers. In August 2024 they also hosted UK-wide youth participation conference in Glasgow, to share our work highlighting recommendations to tackle child food insecurity and learn lessons from other young people engaged in campaigns in Scotland, England and Wales.

In February 2025, the Youth Advisory Group met with Danny Baker MLA to discuss his proposal for a Private Members' Bill that would reinstate the School Holiday Food Grant for families in Northern Ireland.



## EA Newcomer Programme

As part of the EA Newcomer Programme, Oasis delivered weekly Junior and Senior Drop-In provision supporting children and young people from P5 to age 18, engaging **70** junior and **171** senior individual participants across the year, with attendance peaking at 52 young people on a single evening.

Programme delivery was structured around key themes including **health and wellbeing, environment and climate, inclusion and good relations, participation, safety and stability, and learning and achievement.**

Across four quarters, young people took part in a wide range of developmental, creative and social activities, including the **Junior Edible Garden** and **P7 Transition** projects, which built practical skills, confidence and readiness for post-primary school, alongside leadership opportunities such as the **Empower Youth Forum** elections and ongoing social action projects. Sports and wellbeing initiatives like **Play it Clean**, delivered in partnership with Healthy Kidz and local police, promoted teamwork, positive relationships and healthy lifestyles, while **Drop-In** sessions consistently provided safe, welcoming spaces for recreation, discussion and connection, supported by shared meals.

Seasonal programmes such as the **Summer Scheme** offered educational trips, creative workshops, cultural activities and team-building experiences for both age groups. **Cooking and craft projects** throughout the year developed life skills, independence and collaboration, complemented by celebrations that encouraged reflection, gratitude and cultural exchange. In the final quarter, young people participated in structured debates addressing relevant social issues, strengthening confidence, communication and critical thinking, culminating in a public debate event. **Empower Youth Forum** members further demonstrated leadership by planning and delivering the **BEAM small grants project**, managing activities, trips and a wellbeing mini-fair. Overall, the programme successfully empowered young people, amplified their voices, strengthened relationships and provided inclusive, meaningful opportunities for learning, wellbeing and personal growth.

96

SESSIONS  
DELIVERED

24

NATIONALITIES  
INVOLVED

241

PARTICIPANTS  
INVOLVED

6564

TOTAL HOURS  
OF DELIVERY



## ORBIT

This programme finished in December 2024 with a celebration in Portadown Town Hall. Celebrating the contribution of many volunteers, participants and staff over the 3 year programme.

The programme seen 100s of members complete 3 phases and seen volunteers give 1000s of hours over the 3 years.

The celebration night was attended by parents, carers, funders, partners, staff, committee members and participants from over the 3 year project. The event was designed by Empower Youth Forum and included DJ Dave Ralston bringing the energy throughout the event. There was performances by young people, parents and members of the So Pa Sabi dance group all showing cultural expression throughout. We also bought some energy and interactive activities to engage the audience on the evening and rounded up the show with awards. There was delicious food to finish the event and allowed for people to mingle and chat.

This project was funded by TNL community fund







# FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The trustees have identified the following development opportunities which the CIP seeks to achieve over coming years, subject to adequate funding availability.

- Further enhancements of the CIP Centre are proposed in order to upgrade the interior and exterior of the Centre.
- Development of a new 3-year strategic plan.

## SCHEDULE OF CIP FUNDERS

CIP would like to place on record our appreciation to the following funders whose financial support enabled the charity to achieve its objectives during the year.

FUNDER	ISSUE TARGETED
ABC Borough Council	Core Running Costs & Good Relation
McClay Foundation/CINI	Holiday Hunger
TNL Community Fund	Oasis Youth
Education Authority	BME Youth Projects
Neighbourhood Renewal	Youth Project
Red Cross (TEO crisis fund)	Relief of Poverty
The Executive Office	BME Advice Service & Youth Project
Public Health Agency	Warm Packs



S.D BROWN Accountants, Portadown were appointed as the independent examiner and produced a financial statement for CIP.