

BELFAST
UNEMPLOYED
RESOURCE
CENTRE



Annual Summary
2019/20



FOREWORD

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After a three year hiatus the Northern Ireland Government finally went back to power sharing in January 2020, with the hope from the electorate that this would lead to a growth in business, employment, a focus on improving services, such as the NHS, and political stability, with NI having a voice in the Brexit decisions, whilst protecting the integrity of the Good Friday Agreement.

Brexit was the stormy issue of 2019 in the UK and led to a change in leadership for both the Conservative and Labour parties. Boris Johnson replaced Teresa May with his 'Get Brexit done' mantra, Jeremy Corbyn was replaced by Keir Starmer, as the opposition leader and the UK left the EU officially on the 31st of January 2020, although it is anticipated that the detailed workings of an exit could take years to agree. How this will change the environment of living and working in the UK has yet to be realised.

BURC continued to support initiatives such as the CliffEdgeNI, which is a coalition of Organisations in NI campaigning around issues due to Universal Credit.

The second half of the year brought us an unanticipated pandemic with COVID19 becoming the major serious concern for countries throughout the world. As countries went into lockdown, pressure on the NHS mounted, schools were shut down, those who could, worked from home, and a Government furlough scheme hoped to save jobs. Unfortunately, thousands of jobs were lost and the future looks uncertain, with no way to ascertain how many more jobs could be lost in the future. This put more pressure on those already living in conditions of poverty. Food banks came under pressure and local communities responded by delivering food parcels to those who needed it. Welfare services have

been overwhelmed with the number of new applicants. The employment environment looks set to face major changes for the future, but at the moment we have no idea what this may look like. The money used to save people's jobs through the furlough scheme will have to be recouped and we are concerned that the most vulnerable in society will feel the brunt of this.

The impact of the COVID epidemic on the economy is yet to be fully understood and a strong leadership will be required from Stormont and Westminster.

The impact on the economy in Northern Ireland from COVID 19 will be felt for generations to come, a senior official from the Department for the Economy (DfE) has warned, as the Northern Ireland Executive plan strategies to shore up the economy.

A number of businesses have already closed, with the loss of hundreds of jobs, and the situation is likely to get worse, with the concern that many firms could go to the wall in the aftermath of COVID 19.

As we work towards understanding and working within a new normal, knowing there will be challenges to face, we also know, from the experience of the last number of months, that it can be a time for coming together, to support our neighbours and colleagues, a time for reflection, and an opportunity to consider how we deliver services in a flexible way. We have already successfully moved to delivering some services online. As we look ahead to moving forward as an organisation we will take the lessons learned and move forward with positivity and excitement at the possibilities the future can bring.

BURC would like to take this opportunity to thank those who support our work: National Lottery Community Fund; European funders; Co- operation Ireland; Dept of Communities; Dept of Foreign Affairs; Belfast City Council, the volunteers, staff and committee for their tireless work and many others who help us create opportunities and resources.

CHANGE TOWARDS A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

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aims+ Objectives

WHO WE ARE

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

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

VISION

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

PURPOSE

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

VALUES

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

Routes to Resilience

Routes to Resilience (R2R) is one of our projects funded by the Big Lottery Community fund. We have completed Year 4 of a 5 Year programme. This year, we had the pleasure of working in partnership with some fantastic organisations such as MCN (Migrant Community Network) to create a first ever episode of “Shared Stories”: Shared stories is a TV talk show which shines a spotlight into the lives of people from the Minority community living in Northern Ireland.

We are continually working with Queens University students (Social Science and Social Work Department) in developing a homework club to families in West Belfast. We have linked our employability sewing classes with English language support and continue to provide courses in respond to need identified by participants themselves.

This has been another successful year, where we have not just met our targets we have succeeded them. We are looking forward to Year 5 of the programme..

What has worked for us in Year 4:

We have focused on centre based work throughout Belfast. This has been very successful as it allows the opportunity to build and sustain relationships with centres, provide partnerships and most importantly the families feel safe as they are attending somewhere local to where they live.

What have we been delivering in Year 4:

- ✓ Mental Health programmes for all - Mental Health first Aid ; Dealing with stress for e.g
- ✓ Meditation
- ✓ Sewing classes
- ✓ English Language
- ✓ Community Leadership
- ✓ Play Training
- ✓ Family fun days
- ✓ Children’s Participation
- ✓ Digital Camps for young people
- ✓ CV and interview skills
- ✓ Learning how to say No
- ✓ Bend don’t Break



Family quotes:

“Family activities bring folks together. The activities motivate us. What I like is that R2R is for families with children. The workshops/ events don’t separate families”

“It taught me how to deal with teenagers in a calm way. To listen to my kids and try to understand how they are feeling about something before reaching to a conclusion about an issue”

“I managed to get myself a job. I realised I need to lead by example to show my kids, that in life you have to work hard and you will achieve a lot and live a comfortable life. I believe in my self now. I have changed my attitude towards life.”

“I have learnt about life management and working as a team and turning the negative into the positive”

“I did the programme when I was at my lowest, but as we went on with the programme and hearing what other people were going through it helped me”

Young people

“We have become close friends, have a chat and have fun, friends for life”

“I still use the tactics I got form the programme and apply it to my life. I have 3 kids and the programme equipped me in a way that am managing the kids better and the household is a happy place. I believe R2R equipped me even to cope with this COVID-19 epidemic”

Adults Quotes

“Something I have learned from this course that I would plan to use in the future is positive thinking and how important it is to notice the postivie things that are happening around me. I have been getting better at calming myself with what I have learnt on this course. I am also trying to get better at changing my thoughts to more constructive ones.”

“I loved the fun days as we got to play with other children and mum got to talk to other adults”



Stronger Families
Target 4 - Actual 4



Helping Families
Target 4 - Actual 5



Visible Families
Target 4 - Actual 5



English for Family Life
Target 7 - Actual 10



Children Participation
Target 1 - Actual 3



Just for Fun
Target 3 - Actual 4



Family First Workshops
Target 3 - Actual 4

Welfare Rights Unit

As I sit here reflecting on the year gone by, I cannot help wondering what the year ahead will look like for the advice sector. Amid the covid-19 restricted lockdown we responded promptly, ensuring minimal disruption to the services we deliver to our clients.

The Welfare Advice Service is committed to providing a professional service to everyone. To do this we have had to change the way we deliver our service, and how we engage with our clients.

So for now...we are Home Working:

During the current restricted lockdown, our office may be closed but we have systems in place to allow telephone calls to our main switchboard be picked up by a staff member working from home. Emails are the preferred choice for many clients to contact us, WhatsApp is another method of client contact, as it is free to use, and FaceTime and Text Messages.

Welfare Advice Service:

We are committed to providing a confidential, professional advice service to all sectors of the local community in relation to all welfare benefits including Mandatory Reconsiderations, Appeals, Advice on your rights to challenge benefit decisions, Assistance with Benefit forms, Benefit Checks and Better off Calculations.

SIGNPOSTING

Welfare Advice Service 2019-2020:

During 2019-2020, the Welfare Advice Service advised and assisted 1016 clients and dealt with 4735 enquiries. This included 268 face-to-face contacts, 215-telephone advice, 339 outreach clients, 185 email enquiries and 9 home visits.

Gender of Clients:

432 clients were female and 584 clients were male

Profiles of Clients Helped: 32 clients were aged 16-24, 368 clients were aged 25-39, 520 clients were aged 40-59, 92 clients were aged 60-74, and 4 were aged 75+; 564 clients had a disability or long-term health conditions; 800 clients were in receipt of low-income benefits, and we advised and supported 356 clients through mandatory reconsiderations and appeal hearings.

Housing Status:

112 clients were tenants of local housing associations; 52 were living in hostels; 4 presented as homeless; 124 were living with family members; 4 clients were living with friends when they could; 52 clients had a mortgage on their property; 384 clients were NIHE

UC Universal Credit

tenants; 4 were owner-occupiers and 16 owned their property outright; 236 were private tenants; 12 were in a shared ownership contract and 16 clients were living in supported housing.

How People Came to the Service:

494 clients self-referred or came through friends or relatives. Adult Services referred 204 clients for benefit advice and support and 318 clients were existing clients with both ongoing and new enquiries.

Outcomes:

£132,477.15, extra income was secured for low-income families following the advice from the Welfare Advice Service.

Client Satisfaction:

Using 638 client surveys 587 of our clients were happy with the service they received and 510 clients would use the welfare advice again. 472 clients have reported they would recommend the service to others.

What people who use our service said:

'they were now able to worry less about covering essential costs and have extra to spend on food'

they were 'able to use a taxi service to go to the local shops, collect essentials and the taxi takes her home, giving her some of her independence back rather than relying on the goodwill of others'

The majority of clients providing feedback about the service said that it had left them feeling 'happier and less stressed'.

Welfare Advice Service 2020-2021:

We will continue to build links with other complementary services so that we are able to assist, signpost or refer clients who use our service towards other services that may be of assistance to them, ensuring our clients receive as holistic a service as possible, we extend our thanks to those organisations we work closely with. We continue to be committed to the Management Committees and Steering Groups we sit on.

BCC continues to provide funding towards the costs of running the Welfare Advice Service. Without this funding, the Advice Service could not continue and we would like to thank the Belfast City Council for their continued support.

ESOL (English as a Second or Other Language)

Our ESOL programme has been going from strength to strength this year. Our funding from the Department for the Economy and Belfast Met, aimed at providing English language skills to Syrian refugees part of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, was renewed for another year. That allowed us to acquire materials and resources and accommodate an increasingly large number of learners. We offered a variety of courses to meet the different language needs of the learners:

- ✓ Progressors
- ✓ English for Job Hunting
- ✓ Absolute Beginners
- ✓ English for Business Planning

As well as our Wednesday Conversation classes.

We have been welcoming learners from 25 different countries, some days up to 100 learners attended our classes!

We have kept developing and delivering our innovative Volunteer Induction and Training (VIT) programme, focused on equipping volunteers on how to teach ESOL in the community sector and raising awareness of material and techniques used at different levels. The VIT travelled well beyond Belfast and was delivered to groups of Volunteers in Omagh, Ballymoney and, more recently, we made contact with a newly established group of volunteers in Portstewart.

In keeping with BURC's ethos of making Belfast a more welcoming place and encourage our learners to feel more at home in their new hometown, we organised visits to Central Library in the City Hall for our Progressors learners as part of their course. The tutors introduced relevant vocabulary and grammar in class, which the learners could then practise first hand during their outings.

Some of our learners also took part in a few Orientation Days in North Belfast organised with Ardoyne Youth Enterprise. We visited different community organisations like Grow NI, and Cliftonville Community Centre; visited the Tropical Ravine in Botanic Gardens and enjoyed a Family Day at Marrowbone Millennium Park.

We have an amazing group of incredibly committed Volunteers! They have been critical in the successful development of the project to its current point; we simply could not deliver the programme without them. Currently, we have 30 volunteers teaching classes 4 days a week in different delivery teams. In recent weeks, we have been identifying opportunities to deliver ESOL classes online during the lockdown with some of our Volunteers.

Last June we celebrated Volunteers Week with a Volunteers Appreciation Day: we treated our volunteers to a tour of Sailortown followed by a yummy lunch in Cathedral Quarter, a small gesture to acknowledge their hard work!

We have renewed our memberships to NATECLA, ELT Ireland and NALA. Some of our ESOL staff and volunteers have presented at NALA, NATECLA and ELT Ireland's annual conferences throughout the year.

We continue to enjoy a positive and fruitful relationship with various organisations like Belfast City Council, NISA, Hapani, NICONI, Barnardo's, Extern, Belfast Met, Belfast City of Sanctuary (whose Committee BURC is part of) and Ardoyne Youth Enterprise among many others.

Our partnership with Queen's University is ongoing; Arthur McKeown's TEMIRAS (Teaching English to Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers) course was delivered twice in the past year through the Open Learning programme. It was a great experience for all involved and a few of its alumni transitioned to become BURC ESOL Volunteer Tutors.

Last but not least, our very own Arthur McKeown, who started the ESOL programme over five years ago and whose mentorship and continuous hard work have been instrumental in the development and innovation of the programme, was awarded the prestigious "ESOL SIG Champion" award from IATEFL. We are immensely proud of this achievement, which comes as no surprise for all of us who have been working with Arthur in the past few years.

We are delighted to share with you our **FIRST ESOL Champion of 2020**, and what a champion he is!

Introducing (Arthur central person in photo) Mr Arthur McKeown

Why did you decide to become an ESOL teacher?

Another student whom I met when we were both in the first year English class at the University of Edinburgh went to Sweden to teach English to adults. Occasional letters told me - and others - of the world of English language teaching in which he was developing his career. I gradually came to see the potential of this career direction for myself.

What has been the path to your current job?

After graduating from Edinburgh with a degree in Homeric and Classical Greek I worked for a short time as a lighthouse keeper in Orkney and Shetland in the north of Scotland.

I then applied for a post with the British Centre in Sweden, was interviewed and was accepted. Then I worked for 15 years as a teacher, teacher trainer and centre manager on three different continents: Much of my work in Sweden was with technical English for pharmacists. For three years in Kuwait I worked mainly with Learners who were firemen.

Perhaps the most formative period was the four years when I worked in Tripoli in Libya, as director of a big language school. Many of our Learners were adult Beginners who wished to progress to employment where English was a vital requirement.

During my time in Sweden time I completed the DELTA. A few years later I was able to contribute to the design, documentation and delivery of the DELTA programme delivered to colleagues who were working in Tripoli and Kuwait.

In 1990, for family reasons, my wife Elizabeth and I came back to Belfast. There was nothing in English language teaching; I had to re-purpose my career. Having recently completed an MBA at Henley, I worked in management consultancy before getting a job teaching management to native speakers in the Open University and in the Faculty of Business and Management at Ulster University.

One of my last projects was the delivery of several English for Employability programmes for mainly Polish, Lithuanian and Latvian people in County Cavan.

Then, encouraged by some of my Ulster University management students, we created a job club on a Thursday night at the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre in the city centre. Pre-Brexit, its purpose was to help recent arrivals in Belfast:

To understand the local job market, To create the paperwork: curriculum vitae, application form, covering letter. To prepare responses to the questions they might be asked in a job interview.

This was to provide my encore: as I moved towards retirement and was looking for more to do, I encountered Suleiman Abdulahi, a very entrepreneurial Somali man from the Horn of Africa People's Aid Northern Ireland. Suleiman indicated the huge need for a Beginner English language programme for women from the Somali, Sudanese and similar communities. We revived and revised, refreshed the Tripoli model for the programme and delivered it for over a year at the Belfast Islamic Centre. During this time more and more people were coming forward as Volunteers and helped in the creation of a robust model that has been proved to work.

Then, when the first Syrian families arrived in Belfast under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme and needed an English language programme, we were able at BURC ESOL to re-purpose the Belfast Islamic Centre programme. It regularly attracts 25+ Learners for each of the four 2-hour sessions every week.

Since retiring I have been able to contribute as a Volunteer to the design, documentation and delivery of an ESOL Absolute Beginner Compendium to help adult Learners gain the communication skills, confidence and credibility to progress to other programmes available in the wider community where they have come to live here in Belfast and beyond



What do you love most about your job and / or the ESOL context?

I see how our Learners can gain the knowledge, skills and confidence needed when they move from the non-formal delivery environment we provide to the wider world and meet so many other people of different nationalities with whom they need to communicate effectively and successfully in English.

I also appreciate the opportunity to see the volunteers working in delivery teams contribute so much to activities and exercises that help beginners take their first steps in English.

Do you have any specialisms or particular interests within English Language?

My obsession is with the LANGUAGE needs of adult migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who need enough English to take their first steps when they want to be able to get closer to other people in their local areas and integrate more with their local community.

If you could change one or two things (yes, only one or two!) in the adult ESOL context what would it / they be? More awareness and acceptance of the need for more attention to materials and techniques for teaching Absolute Beginners in pre-service training, in-service training and continuing professional development of English. Although this has been changing recently, much of the material for Beginners is culturally insensitive; and much needs to be done by delivery team members to granularise, localise and personalise the material we use for presentation of new language and practise it with our Learners.

More awareness of the contribution made by Volunteers in the church, community and voluntary sector, especially where organisations can show there is quality assurance in the ways in which they provide their services.

What has been your greatest achievement in this field?

I reckon this is providing the widening horizons among various stakeholder groups in the community where I live, so that all can appreciate how they can (however simply, modestly and yet effectively) contribute to making our community a more welcoming place. 'Educating the locals' is a challenge! And I have welcomed the opportunity to practise what I was preaching, using ideas from disruptive innovation.

What has been your best teaching inspiration?

Working at International House in Shaftesbury Avenue in London in 1977 introduced me not only to a large number of interesting students from many different parts of the world but also to a very diverse and high achieving colleagues who went on to contribute in so many ways to English language teaching in the decades that followed.

What else would you like to achieve?

We are currently working on a project to develop quality management systems based on the requirements of ISO29991, the international standard Language Learning Services Outside Formal Education. This is ambitious; but it does a lot to establish the organisation delivery processes, our credibility and our general approach as we move on further in the 21st century.

What has been your funniest moment?

In the break in a session with newly arrived Syrians in Lurgan I was able to ask one of the large group if there was opportunity to use WhatsApp and if they had Wi-Fi at home.

Ali, have you got Wi-Fi at home?

He looked at me quizzically.

No, she is not there. She is not at home. She is in the class. She is sitting over there.

Do you have a mantra you live by? A great quote?

Being a VIRIDUS SENECTUS 'a sprightly and youthful old man' Virgil: Aeneid 6: 304

We salute you Arthur, what an **#esolchampion** you are!



EURES European Employment Services



EURES Transnational

The centre signed a partnership agreement with EURES for another year. We are delighted to announce that three members of staff were fully trained to become EURES Transnational Advisers.

EURES Cross Border

The centre is funded by EURES to provide support in the following areas:

English for employability 2020

English for Employability aims to provide migrants in Northern Ireland and the border regions with the sector specific language skills they need to improve employment prospects.

The programme is offered to migrants who wish to improve their English to create employment opportunities or those who wish to increase their chances of promotion within their employment. Ninety Four participants overall took part. Migrants living and working, or looking for work within Northern Ireland and border regions, within the following sectors:

The classes which took place fall under the following:

Absolute beginners (x 5) Progressors (x 3)
Job Club (X 2)

Participants came from Belfast, Lurgan, Armagh, Dungannon, Newry and Bangor.

A link with the ICTU (Irish Congress of Trade Unions) which helped the project reach a wider audience.

Volunteer induction and Training

This programme aims to bring sustainability to English for employment by training volunteers to be able to take sector specific classes across Northern Ireland and the border regions.

Volunteer induction and Training (x2)

Number of attendees on Sector Specific English with gender breakdown

Total number of Attendees	81
Female Attendees	47
Male Attendees	34

Job Shadowing

Fourteen participants took part 7 females and 7 male. They are all currently working on a one to one basis with mentor's relevant to their areas of interest.

Access Skills Ireland



Access Skills Ireland is a subsidiary company of the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre and has offices in the Belfast Unemployed Centre and in Pearse Rd, Letterkenny.

In 2019 we were successful in winning a 2 year contract with Tipperary ETB for the delivery of their Hospitality Operations Traineeships. One course started in September 2019, the courses are 50 weeks in duration. It is envisaged that 2 courses will run annually commencing January and September. We are also currently subcontracted to deliver Hospitality & Catering courses in Donegal, Cavan, Monaghan & Dublin. We specialise in working with long-term unemployed, individuals seeking to re-skill, up-skill and provide additional supports for clients and have expertise in working with businesses in addressing their training needs.

Access Skills Ireland has been successful in gaining admission on to panels for the delivery of training with The Galway rural Development Company and The Dublin Southside Partnership. Access Skills Ireland in conjunction with The Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre Cross Border was successful in winning contracts for facilitation of Youth Citizenship & Leadership Programmes in Sligo & Donegal. The Youth Citizenship & Leadership Programmes focus on youth coming from cross community backgrounds including indigenous Irish Catholics and Protestants along with other cultures in Irish society.

Participants learn about the similarities and differences of their cultural background to eliminate perceptions. To build a connection between participants the programme will directly address current issues affecting youth such as negative impacts of social media, bullying, racism, sectarianism and discrimination based on class and difference. The Programme aims to build the confidence, personal development and propensity of participants to understand and accept difference.



Youth Empowerment Scheme



This group of young people from the New Lodge and Carrickhill areas of North Belfast ranging in age from 14 – 18 yrs are extremely disconnected from their community and can be impacted by some form of addiction and suffer from Mental Health issue/s.

The areas where they live are disadvantaged experiencing high levels of unemployed, poor housing, and high levels of suicide. The rising drug culture, and rising crime are accepted as now being a fact of daily life in their areas, some of them need support or help in

coping with the issues in their lives, some feel excluded and marginalised in their respective communities, and are seen as troublemakers' and anti-community due to their involvement each year with the New Lodge Bonfire. Local Youth provision is sometimes denied to them, they are left as outsiders in their community, branded too difficult to work with engaged in a programme of mixed physical activity and personal development programmes.

DFA Integration programme

(Department of Foreign Affairs)

The programme worked with new communities in Belfast and Letterkenny to support them in successful integration, help them to understand their own needs and express those needs through local government and community systems.

The most effective way of achieving this is to provide them with the skills and knowledge to develop local community groups and support systems; navigate local systems and access local support.

- ✓ **3 X WORKSHOPS COMPLETED**
2 in Belfast - 1 in Letterkenny,
45 participants.
- ✓ **2 X COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP COURSES**
1 in Belfast - 1 in Letterkenny,
30 participants.

Topics included: Identifying communities; community auditing; setting up a committee; Networking; local Government systems; funding; facilitation; accessing community resources.

The John Hewitt Bar and Restaurant Scheme

At the end of 2019, The John Hewitt was in a very positive position. We had a more successful Christmas period than previous years, all our margins were going in the right direction, and we were starting to reap the benefits of the beer garden and other upgrades carried out over recent months and years. Even at the start of 2020 we had one of our most successful starts to the year.



Now that we are battling against a global pandemic many things have changed. We were forced to closed due to lockdown, when we reopened we did so under heavy restrictions, and there is now an enforced curfew for the hospitality sector. We face the possibility of even heavier restrictions and even further lockdown measures. All this has devastating impact to a business like The John Hewitt.

All that being said The John Hewitt's ethos and dedication to protecting its workforce has shone through. While many other businesses were making many of their staff redundant way before they were forced to close in March, The John Hewitt did no such thing. When the furlough scheme was announced and many hospitality staff went unpaid for up to 8 weeks until the Government relief came in, our staff did not miss a pay check. Even now we are doing whatever we can to make sure our staff stays in employment, and to date, we still retain 100% of our workforce.

There is no doubt that there are even more difficult times ahead. But it is our intention to battle through,

adapt through any restriction, and come out the other side. We will get back to a place where, once again, our stage is a musician's office, our walls are an artist's gallery, and our bar is a festival's hub. We will get back to supporting our local breweries, distillers, charities, fundraisers, and community. Because now more than ever we all need each other's support.





Committee and Staff Members

Committee Members - Northern Ireland Trade Union Education and Social Centre
Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre.

Mr Joe Bowers – Chairperson
Mr Kevin Doherty – Vice Chair
Mr Brendan Mackin - Secretary
Mr. P. Mackel - Treasurer
Ms Anne Molloy - Member
Mr Arthur Mc Keown - Member
Ms. Mary Gray - Member

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