



# EAST BELFAST **A Connected Community**

Stories of **East Belfast Coronavirus Support Group**, who worked selflessly for the greater good of all communities in East Belfast in 2020.



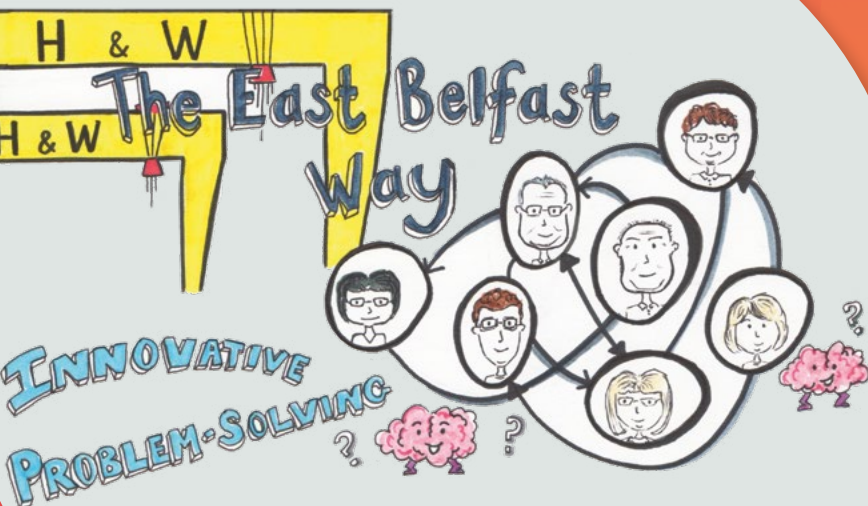
EAST BELFAST  
**Coronavirus  
Community  
Support Group**



Department for  
**Communities**



**Belfast  
City Council**



EAST BELFAST  
**Coronavirus  
Community  
Support Group**

East Belfast Coronavirus Community Support was established in late March 2020, by a group of community organisations, churches and local politicians. The purpose of the group was to collectively co-ordinate practical responses in local communities throughout East Belfast during the Coronavirus pandemic.

The group transitioned into East Belfast Covid-19 Reference Group in September 2020, in an attempt to provide a more strategic response to the continuing Coronavirus pandemic.

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## FOREWORD

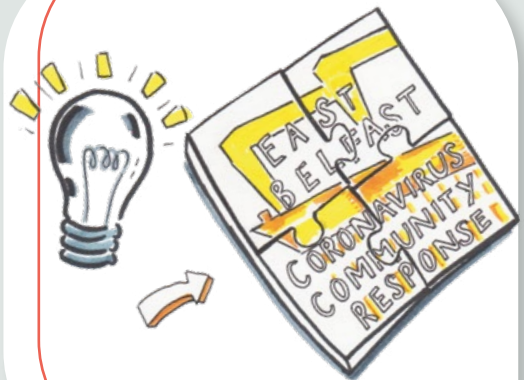
When Her Majesty The Queen spoke to the Nation about the challenges of Covid-19, she drew parallels between the pandemic and the challenges faced by the World War 2 generation. She also reflected with pride that just as then, 'our streets are not empty: they are filled with the love and care that we have for each other'.

Belfast has no finer demonstration of this than the co-ordinated efforts made by so many in the east of the city. As Lord Lieutenant, I have been privileged to speak with just some of the organisations and individuals involved with the delivery of support. I have invariably been struck by the commitment, kindness and desire to help friends, neighbours and some of the most vulnerable people in the community. The breadth and scope of what has been delivered is hugely impressive, as has been the ability to respond swiftly and appropriately to every challenge that arose. East Belfast has undoubtedly proved itself to be a place of compassion and a community that well understands what it means to care.

Thank you to every-one, young and not so young who chose to make a difference, and to EBCDA for co-ordinating this important publication. The vibrancy and creativity of the illustrations bring to life the spirit and vivacity of this special community that has so much to be proud of. I certainly could not be more proud of this outstanding effort.



**Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle CBE**  
Lord Lieutenant, Co Borough of Belfast





# LORD MAYOR'S CERTIFICATE

This certificate is proudly presented by  
The Rt Hon The Lord Mayor of Belfast

**In recognition of your contribution  
to volunteering in the city of Belfast**

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Alderman Frank McCoubrey'.

.....  
Alderman Frank McCoubrey  
Lord Mayor



## INTRODUCTION

It started like any other year, but 2020 would not be like any other year. News reports in January about a new bug emerging in China evolved into a world-wide pandemic. Restrictions were introduced, and an announcement by the Prime Minister on 23rd March informed us that people must stay at home and certain businesses must close. Lockdown had officially commenced and we were entering uncharted waters.

Instinctively, some community groups in East Belfast had already begun to respond. However, it became clear that the scale of the need emerging could not be solely addressed by independent responses. Co-operation and coordination was required.

Several community and church activists, alongside local politicians, had been discussing the challenges that would arise and the resources that would be required. On the same day that lockdown was announced, a meeting was held in East Belfast Network Centre, probably the first 'socially distanced,' meeting that any of us had attended. At that meeting, "East Belfast Coronavirus Community Support," (EBCCS) was born and key principles and actions were agreed. Although East Belfast already had a strong community infrastructure, the coming months revealed an unprecedented level of co-operation.

It was agreed that the group would act as a catalyst to mobilise and co-ordinate the community sector in East Belfast. The purpose was to ensure that every resident had access to information and support. A key decision taken at the meeting was to establish a telephone helpline, operating seven days a week, 12 hours a day. Social media was also mobilised to share information, and a Facebook site was created. EBCDA (East Belfast Community Development Agency) agreed to manage a WhatsApp group "EB Local Response Updates", allowing those directly involved in delivering services to maximise and share resources.

The Helpline was operational within two days and would run for 101 days, responding to over 1,200 calls. Within 17 days of being established, 33,000 leaflets advertising the Helpline were delivered to individual homes. The response to the crisis included 35 existing groups delivering services across East Belfast, from the Short Stand to Tullycarnet and from Sydenham to Braniel.

Other individuals and groups assisted with logistics, funding and specialist support. As new needs emerged and trends were identified, EBCCS responded accordingly. "Fone Friends" was established so that groups could reach the isolated and unconnected, to alleviate angst and loneliness. While supplying food parcels and meals became a mainstay of the response, providing reassurance and making contact with the vulnerable, and those shielding, was also key.

When funding was released from the Department for Communities and Belfast City Council, it was overseen by EBCCS and managed by EBCDA. The groups were able to: source and distribute PPE Equipment, (10,000 bottles of hand sanitiser and 12,000 pairs of protective gloves), distribute food parcels (4,200) and supply cooked meals (5,000). This progressed to providing educational packs for children and resilience packs for the elderly and families, 850 packs in total.

These statistics are a fraction of the work undertaken; thousands of prescriptions were also picked up and delivered, countless shopping trips were completed, help with utility bills and hundreds of individual requests were facilitated; from checking in on relatives to house moves. Each response and intervention behind these statistics was individually felt on a human level.

The success of the response emanated from the fact that it was conducted at a local level, by local people who had a connection to, and understanding of the communities they served. They were able to identify local issues and provide local solutions. EBCCS acted quickly and decisively, with regular meetings facilitating an adaptability in approach as the situation developed. Innovative ideas were sought and groups encouraged to play to their strengths. The normal commitment to community by local groups was channelled into this COVID-19 crisis.

On 22nd April, a month after the formation of EBCCS, the Communities Minister, Deirdre Hargey, said, 'The grassroots response to the COVID-19 outbreak has been an outstanding collective effort and has been providing vital help and support to the most vulnerable in our society since the very beginning of this crisis.'

The legacy of EBCCS's response and that of similar groups around the country needs to be acknowledged but also thanked.

Communities made themselves central to the response and they must be central to recovery. The concept of a partnership approach, involving the community, must be truly embedded in relationships at all levels of government, because, as COVID-19 taught us, we are all in this together.

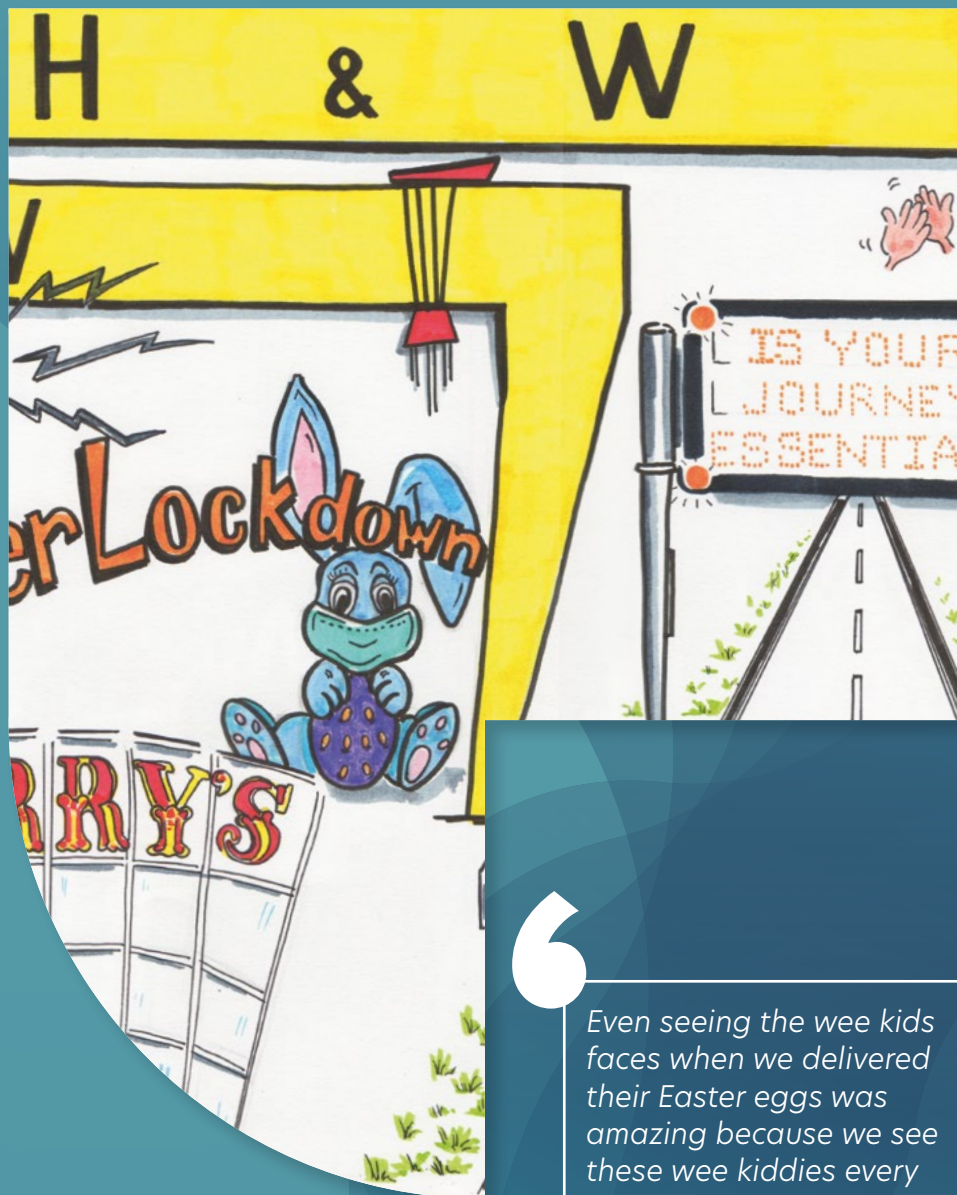
COVID-19 has affected us in unimaginable ways, but the response has also given us a glimpse into the goodness that exists within. EBCCS stepped up to the mark, filled the gap and worked with all to ensure that everyone in East Belfast had access to support.

This Booklet seeks to provide an overview of the work of EBCCS and highlight the difference made by the individuals who worked selflessly for the greater good of all communities in East Belfast.



**Mervyn Gibson, Chair**





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Even seeing the wee kids faces when we delivered their Easter eggs was amazing because we see these wee kiddies every day of life playing in our streets and now their wee lives are turned upside down.





## ARDCARN LOCAL RESIDENTS GROUP

Ardcarn Local Residents Group formed a subgroup named, 'Covid-19 Community Response Team', to tackle the threat that Covid-19 posed on our precious communities. During that time, volunteers received over 70 phone calls from residents and provided a variety of services, including the delivery of over 800 food parcels to the community and the collection of over 50 prescriptions.



While things return to 'the new normal,' we, as a group, are beyond thankful to have continued support from East Belfast Community Development Agency.

Whatever the future holds for our community, however uncertain, we are confident that we are ready to deliver this support again to the community.

We are also proud to say that we were one of the few groups across East Belfast to set up a direct phone-call service for residents who were lonely and needed a friendly chat while self-isolating.

It is important to acknowledge that this level of support could not have been achieved without the help and dedication of our volunteers. Not only did they take a stand when the future looked so uncertain, but they also sacrificed time with their own cherished families to deliver for the community.

During the lockdown, we worked closely with Belfast City Council, East Belfast Community Development Agency, and East Belfast Coronavirus Community Support, ensuring that we followed the right advice and implemented the correct procedures to deliver the services.

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## BALLYMACARRETT No6 DISTRICT

During lockdown, the volunteers from the Ballymacarrett No6 District were able to offer a unique service in response to community need. We provided private home layout reconfiguration, or in simple terms, we were furniture movers.



A number of people, some of whom were being discharged from hospital, had a requirement for their bedroom to be moved to their ground floor, or, for their living room (complete with television, radio and telephone), to be moved to their first floor.

I'm not sure how we became the pandemic porters! Perhaps it was because as younger men we were accomplished bonfire builders, and I'm not referring to the quality of furniture we moved, rather our prowess at manoeuvring bulky items around limited spaces! However, it was more likely because we had "Marty - man with a van" and "Sandy - bloke with a big yoke!"

Our other task was to clear pallets of essentials from the Network Centre carpark and build 30 food stations in the Fitzpatrick Hall. There's that bonfire theme again! One

of our men was a little butter-fingered when it came to jars of jam and bolognese sauce, I won't name him, as Laurence is a good friend of mine! Sorry about the spillages Darren.

We really enjoyed playing our part in contributing to the health, safety and well-being of the East Belfast community.

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## BLOOMFIELD CORONAVIRUS GROUP

Days before the lockdown began, our Bloomfield CV Group **Beersbridge Elim, Bloomfield Community Association, The Reach Project and Walkway Community Association**, had mobilised and quickly established the potential needs of our local Community.



We leafleted the Bloomfield area, providing the phone numbers of contacts within our groups who were willing to help out. We activated and recruited volunteers to help with: shopping for groceries, collecting prescriptions, delivering food parcels, working on the emergency helpline, keeping in contact, and most importantly, supporting the most vulnerable in our community.

After the initial response, we made a plan for the way forward. We wanted our packages and parcels to mean something – we wanted them to be a “hug,” for those people who couldn’t physically be hugged, due to shielding and self-isolating. We added comfort food for our local pensioners, flowers in our resilience packs and little notes to let our community know that they were not alone. We delivered resilience and educational packs to our local families, supported by Connswater Community Greenway & Eastside Learning.

We worked hard and supported each other, during what was a very stressful time – we laughed and cried together. Everything

took so much longer than normal; shopping, collecting prescriptions, waiting in queues at the shops and chemist. We never failed to meet the needs of those most vulnerable. We celebrated birthdays with those who lived alone, we baked buns and delivered them to people who were self-isolating. We were humbled by the huge numbers of people who offered to volunteer, and also those people who donated money to help make our food parcels that little bit special.

The legacy of our group is that we will continue to work together for the good of the Bloomfield Community, and will continue to provide as much support as possible as we move to recover from a year that none of us could ever have imagined! We have made new connections and built a strong resilient network of people, willing to do the best that they can for our Bloomfield Community.

As the days pass (and the full extent of the pandemic is uncovered), we hope to meet the new emerging needs as jobs are lost and the financial impact is felt. We hope to serve and advise by using our wonderful East Belfast Community Partners, who, like us, never tire in their quest to make East Belfast a better place to live, work and play.



## CLONDUFF COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

The time and effort devoted to this venture by all, not least the members of Clonduff Community Association (CCA), is commendable and everyone should be proud of their selfless actions in giving support to the local estate and helping those in need.



Finally, I'd like to offer special thanks to Riah Totten. Riah baked hundreds of scones for Clonduff residents and they were a highlight for those who received them, but she also baked at least ten times that amount for East Belfast in general. A wonderful example of going above and beyond for the community! A true credit to her parents and family.

The members of CCA spent countless hours delivering hundreds of food parcels over the 15 weeks, but it wasn't just food that was delivered, it was also a friendly face. The little chats and time spent together helped to generate a real sense of community spirit and inspired many residents to get involved and offer their time and support too. This is what community is all about!

At the beginning of this scheme, we received a grant from BCC, which was used to purchase and deliver meat parcels and other food products to over 50 houses in the community. We could not have delivered so many of these parcels without the support of local businesses. Special credit must go to Bill McCann Meats and Spar, Ballygowan Road; they have supported us on many occasions and we are indebted to them - thank you so much.

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## COMPASSION BELFAST

Our partnership with EBCCS, in response to the Coronavirus emergency, has been a privilege for Compassion Belfast; a welcome opportunity to offer assistance to people across our city throughout this difficult time.

Compassion Belfast operate The LIVING Room, a weekly project where we offer assistance with food, to people who are facing crisis. This is made possible through donations from various supporters. When lockdown was introduced, our usual sources of supply ceased and we faced the prospect of stock levels becoming so depleted that we could not operate! Thanks to the substantial food supplies, made available by EBCCS, we were able to keep The LIVING Room operational, by continuing to supply doorstep deliveries to people who needed help in our allocated area.

Requests for help varied, from a vulnerable single mum who lost her part-time job when the café she worked in was forced to close, to a self-isolating elderly couple, who couldn't get to the shops due to health problems. Our volunteers found that the help offered in a food parcel was greatly appreciated, but the chance to have a chat with someone, even if it was just down the garden path, was of equal value!

The EBCCS partnership demonstrated a healthy community spirit across East Belfast, offering a lifeline to many.



*Our volunteers found that the help offered in a food parcel was greatly appreciated, but the chance to have a chat with someone, even if it was just down the garden path, was of equal value!*



COMPASSION  
BELFAST



## CONNSWATER COMMUNITY CENTRE/ EAST BELFAST ACT INITIATIVE

On 16th March, Connswater Community Centre made the decision to cancel our pensioner's St. Patrick's Day lunch, due to COVID-19. With the help of **East Belfast ACT Initiative** and the Lane Butchers at Orangefield, 25 meals were delivered directly to those local pensioners.



East Belfast ACT Initiative then proposed the idea that Connswater Community Centre could be used as a soup kitchen. This idea was driven forward by the staff and a team of volunteers, and resulted in meals being made and delivered daily, to more than 2,000 elderly and vulnerable people in our community each week. This continued throughout lockdown and also included:

- Delivering thousands of leaflets on behalf of the East Belfast Coronavirus Support Group
- Sourcing and delivering PPE to numerous health care providers
- Delivering non-perishable food packs supplied by Belfast City Council and East Belfast Coronavirus Support Group.

East Belfast ACT Initiative (Action for Community Transformation) is a transformation initiative which supports former combatants in the post cease fire climate. It encourages its members to embrace new, positive leadership roles within their local communities. The meals programme during the pandemic actively engaged its members in these positive roles.

Connswater Community Centre became a hub during the lockdown with dedicated volunteers coming together to make and co-ordinate the allocation of meals and packs to the local community. None of this work would have been possible without the help of East Belfast Coronavirus Support Group, Belfast City Council and generous donations from local businesses, organisations and individuals, and for this, we are eternally grateful.

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## CREGAGH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Cregagh Community Association worked alongside three local churches, volunteers from the community and Lisnasharragh Councillors, to prepare and deliver food parcels to our older/most vulnerable/self-isolating residents in Cregagh and the surrounding areas for 14 weeks during lockdown.



We met weekly in Mount Merrion Parish Church, where six volunteers would prepare the parcels and another six would deliver them to the community. In addition, our volunteers collected prescriptions and assisted with weekly shopping.

We were very fortunate to be part of the East Belfast Coronavirus Community Support Project. East Belfast Community

Development Agency would purchase non-perishable food items for us and these bundles of food were made available five times over the 14 weeks. We received many donations from local churches and residents in the Cregagh area, as well as funding from CFNI, which enabled us to purchase food items for parcels every week. Our local shops were invaluable, offering great support in the ordering and buying of items for our weekly parcels. In total, we delivered over 400 parcels.

We also secured funding from Northern Ireland Housing Executive to provide cleaning products and toiletries parcels, which we delivered to 150 residents, over a six week period.

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## DIAMOND PROJECT



During the lockdown, the Diamond Project helped and supported the elderly and vulnerable in the community in numerous ways. We were able to provide a variety of packs containing food and fruit, as well as toiletries and cleaning products to the vulnerable people in the area. We also provided resilience packs and VE Day packs, which the kids really enjoyed.

The residents were given an information pack which contained a list of names and numbers of the volunteers who were assigned to their street, as well as a red and green card with details of how to use them.

We spent a lot of time on, 'walk-arounds,' to make sure that all the residents in the area were coping well, and to check if they had any housing or universal credit issues, but also, just for a quick chat, which the residents loved!

As a bonus, we played street bingo and everyone sat in their own garden and enjoyed a bit of fun. We would like to say a massive thank you to all the agencies and statutory bodies who helped and supported our area during such a difficult time.

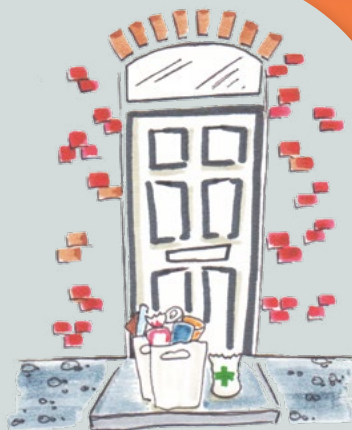
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*Giving the parcels out and seeing the smiles on the resident's faces and having the most vulnerable in our community tell us that our kindness would be rewarded in other ways, really did bring tears to my eyes.*



## EAST BELFAST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

It was the job of the East Belfast Community Development Agency (EBCDA) to perform a coordinating role on behalf of East Belfast Coronavirus Community Support. This involved working with Belfast City Council to ensure that the available funding was managed within the contract issued. We also produced monthly reports for BCC, providing statistical and anecdotal information from East Belfast.



We produced and managed a “live” Google spreadsheet which included the contact details for all the groups, individuals, Cllrs, MLAs and MP. This allowed everyone to have direct access to contacts in different areas. It was updated Monday to Friday throughout April, May and June and updated in July and August as required.

We sourced the purchase of the bulk food from the supplier, to allow the 30 groups involved in the network to have access to food for their areas. They, in turn, distributed small but effective food parcels to individuals and families. We delivered 100 weekly loaves (1,200 in total) around the various groups in the network.

In addition to food, we also pulled together resilience packs for both adults and children, which were designed to ease the boredom of the lockdown situation.

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## EAST BELFAST ALTERNATIVES



As part of the East Belfast Coronavirus Community response, East Belfast Alternatives, answered calls from two support line numbers. The phones were manned seven days a week from 9am to 6pm. Staff members, along with the help of staff from EBIAC, Bloomfield, Connswater Greenway and Walkway, received 1,260 requests for support to help families and individuals in need. On receiving a call, staff were able to assess the person's situation and offer help accordingly, by signposting the caller to their closest community organisation.

East Belfast Alternatives staff continued to support all their referrals via Zoom, and offered practical support to those shielding; by assisting with grocery shopping, the collection of prescriptions or the delivery of food parcels. Over 200 activity packs for various age groups were compiled and delivered, and 50 personal hygiene and cleaning packs were distributed. Tesco vouchers and utility top-up requests were also completed, thanks to funding and donations.



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*Due to some of the requests for help, staff had to be quite creative and were grateful for the support they received.*

Due to some of the requests for help, staff had to be quite creative and were grateful for the support they received. The majority of the requests for items, such as bunk beds, a double mattress, cooker, microwave and a zimmer frame, were fulfilled. The Connswater Homes maintenance team secured property for victims of domestic violence, and provided and installed recycled furniture for families in need. Members from the local Orange Lodge also kindly helped to move furniture for numerous people returning from hospital.

## EAST BELFAST COMMUNITY COUNSELLING CENTRE

During the period of lockdown and uncertainty, East Belfast Community Counselling Centre has been very responsive in adapting our services. Our aim has been to enable our service users' mental health needs to be met in the best way possible.

It is key that we continue to prepare for the reopening of society, for those who have been shielded for a long time, and those who have lost jobs, and perhaps even family members over this period. Having access to counselling services is going to be a crucial factor in determining how well the local community will cope with returning to a more normal situation post-Covid.

Local community organisations have been doing an amazing job, assisting the vulnerable with practical support, food, medicines and basic needs over this period and that work in itself is an essential service. However, given the already high levels of poor mental health, self-harm and suicide among the community, we believe that good mental health is going to be key to supporting the local community to come together physically and psychologically. We would like to thank the Community Foundation, Department for Communities and Lottery for the funding they have provided during this time.



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## EAST BELFAST INDEPENDENT ADVICE CENTRE



East Belfast Independent Advice Centre (EBIAC) anticipated that the demand for their services during the pandemic would be high, given the impact on families, schools, employment, benefits and general health guidance.

Our biggest concern was how we would provide these services, given the restrictions imposed. Centres were closed, public access was not permitted and staff had to work from home; all of which made things quite difficult. Thanks to the support and hard work of our staff we were able to overcome a lot of the issues by learning to work remotely and communicate via telephone, email and Zoom meetings.

There was a great response from other organisations in the community, who were also trying to overcome restrictive measures to maintain their services. Due to their hard work and support we were able to consistently refer to and avail of their services. We would like to thank: The Larder, EBCDA, Alternatives and The Scaffolding project for all their help during what has been a very strange and difficult time.



*Thanks to the support and hard work of our staff we were able to overcome a lot of the issues by learning to work remotely and communicate via telephone, email and Zoom meetings.*





Hi all, it's great to see the response from East Belfast, I'm a blow in from the North but response of community activists, church leaders and politicians is like nothing I've ever seen before and I am proud to serve with you.



## EASTSIDE LEARNING

Support from EBCCS, enabled Eastside Learning to extend the reach of their 'Family Learning Packs,' to more places in East Belfast, through their member groups. 400 packs for both pre-school and primary school children were distributed, containing a wide variety of resources to support home learning and fun, family activities.



This process required a huge collaborative effort. We also really benefited from our partnership with Booktrust NI and Save the Children, who provided a selection of free books and ideas to add to the packs.



**EAST  
SIDE**  
LEARNING

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## EAST BELFAST SURESTART

During lockdown, East Belfast Surestart continued to deliver much needed support to families. Hundreds of weekly support phone calls and a variety of WhatsApp groups, where staff and parents have been able to keep in touch with each other, have been invaluable. Staff were also able to deliver virtual story and activity sessions.



Keeping in touch and supporting families has been vital for our families and community at this time and we are thankful for the support we have received to enable us to do this. Being part of a wider support initiative was really fantastic and has benefited our families so much.

We delivered many Zoom activities with our two year olds, which were always noisy and lots of fun! More recently, we have enjoyed having face to face contact again with families and have been conducting garden gate visits, family walks in the park and trips to our own garden.

As well as all of this, we have delivered practical help, in terms of support with food and electricity to those families in need. It has been wonderful to provide resilience packs during our 'Programme for 2 Year Olds,' graduation visits and to see such happy smiling wee faces.

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## EAST BELFAST MISSION (EBM)

Home. We were all locked down at home so East Belfast Mission (EBM) tried to make home as comfortable a place as possible.

We tried to make it:

**A PLACE OF SHELTER** - We kept Hosford Hostel virus free and provided a safe space for our residents; and to those who moved to their own home, we offered practical tenancy support.

**A PLACE TO EAT** - thanks to the Belfast City Council, we supplied food to over 200 households. We maintained the Meals on Wheels service through 100 days of lockdown.

**A PLACE TO TALK** - with the support of church members and EBM employees, we phoned people associated with the Mission; and for those with deeper issues, our Care Counsellors offered phone call listening.

**A PLACE TO LEARN** - Aspire Homework Project helped children with home schooling via Zoom, and then, as lockdown eased, kids had a chance to meet up. Turas had an additional 300 online learners.

**A PLACE TO WORSHIP** - We offered live worship online every Sunday, and supported others offline with readings and prayers.



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*EBM appreciated being one of the community organisations who were part of the East Belfast Coronavirus Community Support. The group's work proved that the generous heart of East Belfast still beats strongly.*



**EAST BELFAST  
MISSION**

## ENGAGE WITH AGE

Engage with Age is a Belfast charity which aims to enable older people to lead happier, healthier, and more connected lives. It works with an extensive number of older people's groups in East Belfast and supports the Belfast East Seniors' Forum.



During the Coronavirus pandemic, the charity focused on promoting health and safety messages. Engage with Age adjusted its style of group work to include: an extensive telephone check-in service, production of a newspaper for older people (to reach those who aren't online), and various online activities. It staged a one day festival of home bases, online and outdoor activities in June 2020.

With the lifting of restrictions, Engage with Age promoted outdoor walks, outdoor bowls and other safe activities. Online activities for individuals are still taking place, including bingo nights, and WhatsApp cook-alongs. Groups are receiving top tips on how to meet and be safe within coronavirus restrictions, and we now offer a telephone Befriending service to address the impact of loneliness on older people.



*Engage with Age adjusted its style of group work to include: an extensive telephone check-in service, production of a newspaper for older people (to reach those who aren't online).*



## LAGAN VILLAGE YOUTH & COMMUNITY GROUP

Lagan Village Youth & Community Group recognised the emotional impact that COVID-19 had. It left our community with a completely new mindset and residents felt unsure and concerned about their well-being.



Lagan Village has always been a key player in supporting public health, and this is even more evident in the current situation. We are closer to, and better equipped at connecting with marginalised people, and are ideally placed to implement a community led approach.

One of the vital things that materialised during the pandemic was the level of support from local neighbours, who were connecting and looking out for each other, more than ever before. It prompted a 'community togetherness,' along with an informal support action plan, that organised aid for people in need; delivering vital food parcels and emergency medical prescriptions.

An unusual amount of people stepped forward as formal volunteers, to support our community hub, and offer their time and skills in ensuring that those who were vulnerable and isolated had the care and vital items needed in this time of hardship.

Having a strong community infrastructure and supportive social network helped our community to provide the support that was needed, and acknowledge the importance of people's resilience during this emergency.

*We are closer to, and better equipped at connecting with marginalised people, and are ideally placed to implement a community led approach.*



## LEDLEY HALL BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB TRUST LTD

During the COVID-19 lockdown, Ledley Hall Boys and Girls Club Trust Ltd completed a wide variety of work in the community. As a youth centre, we maintained a lot of our delivery online and kept in touch with our young people as much as possible.

We completed one-to-one work with young people, some of our counselling sessions continued online, and we continued with our junior member's homework club. We also delivered various items to our young people to complete at home, for example: lock down t-shirts and pizza making.

The food we received allowed us to deliver over 200 food parcels to people in need within our community and we were incredibly grateful for this. In total, we delivered over 450 meals to local pensioners who were shielding and vulnerable. We also partnered with Framewerks, who we would like to say a massive thank you to, as they provided us with 30 portions of soup every day, which we were then able to distribute to local pensioners within East Belfast.

In addition, the small grant process enabled us to support some of our families with specific food hampers, gas and electricity.



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... we continued with our junior member's homework club. We also delivered various items to our young people to complete at home, for example: lock down t-shirts and pizza making.





“

Great community spirit.  
Just met a wee old man  
when out for a walk  
standing alone in his street.  
Said hello and then got all  
his 4 year old memories from  
75 years ago today... it was  
a special 15 mins.



Kindness

I'm so proud  
to work in East

Cenerosity

## MOUNTPOTTINGER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH


During the pandemic, a small team of twelve, plus volunteers, in Mountpottinger Presbyterian Church, sought to be a friend to those who felt isolated and alone. A number of those 'befrienders,' were themselves single and alone.



Nothing beats a friendly conversation and we tried our best to achieve that, to honour the old Belfast Spirit. At the height of lockdown, when requests out-stripped our volunteers, we needed additional support from other groups, and this was most welcome and valuable.

We set up a telephone network to offer support and a listening ear to the befriended, a network that would offer comfort and support during confusing or distressing times.

A number of those who telephoned were self-referrals, others were from Belfast City Council, social services or from EBCCS help line in East Belfast. Some new friendships have been established as a result of those phone calls.

Most of the befrienders are from the local area and therefore have crucial local knowledge. They were able to answer all the little questions that are often so invaluable, simple requests like, 'Do you know a good cleaner, or, someone who could come and cut my hair as I am house bound?'.  
  




*We set up a telephone network to offer support and a listening ear to the befriended, a network that would offer comfort and support during confusing or distressing times.*



## OASIS CARING IN ACTION

At Oasis Caring in Action, the majority of our Child Care staff volunteered to open during lockdown, (with help from Belfast Trust '3 Child care Pods) to cater for the children of NHS Key workers, at considerable risk to themselves and their families.

The Good Morning Oasis team continued with daily phone calls, phoning 200 clients each week, to check in and lift their spirits. We organised a scheme to get 1,000 Emergency Green Bottles delivered in partnership with McKay's Chemists and jointly delivered their medication and enrolled isolated individuals in GMO service. Knowing that key information is stored in this bottle in their fridge, gave clients some peace of mind.

The Imago team contacted all their clients daily by phone, and latterly, by phones supplied by Tesco, to allow for face time calls. We are now encouraging clients to meet us at coffee shops as confidence and trust builds.

Family support did everything for their families throughout lockdown; ran errands, assisted with shopping and even sourced a number of iPads for home schooling support, with the help of Family Hubs.

At the start of lockdown, the Prince's Trust team were nearing the end of their 12 week programme and staff continued to lead the young people, helping them to build confidence and putting them back on their



feet. Throughout lockdown, they created a safe place for dangerous truths for these young people, maintaining contact, providing food, electric and gas vouchers.

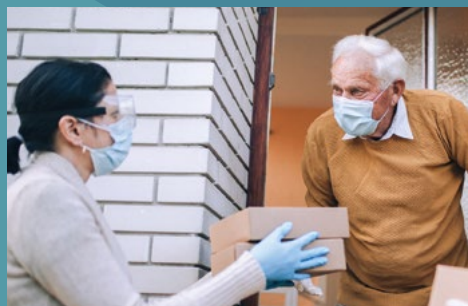
We also delivered over 250 food, resilience, dementia and children packages as well as 150 Easter eggs.

*The Imago team contacted all their clients daily by phone, and latterly, by phones supplied by Tesco, to allow for face time calls. We are now encouraging clients to meet us at coffee shops as confidence and trust builds.*



## RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION OF CHERRYVALLEY, KENSINGTON AND SHANDON (RACKS)

The Residents Association of Cherryvalley, Kensington and Shandon RACKS has helped distribute many food parcels to those in the wider area who are most at risk from this virus. Need should not be defined by postcode, and if nothing else, this community has been drawn closer together as a result, with new understandings being formed.



We have helped many elderly residents, ensuring that they received essential supplies at this time, from those who lost close family members and couldn't even leave the house to attend funerals, to others who have called the East Belfast helpline and simply asked for our help. Providing support to those residents, some of whom have felt isolated for the first time, and who may otherwise have slipped through the support net, has been rewarding for us all.

As a group, I hope this helps define RACKS as part of a wider network of communities in East Belfast, all now facing similar problems in the months and years ahead, and that we can contribute towards that journey in a more inclusive and positive manner.

*Providing support to those residents, some of whom have felt isolated for the first time, and who may otherwise have slipped through the support net, has been rewarding for us all.*



## SCAFFOLDING PROJECT

The Scaffolding Project is a collaborative project in East Belfast, it delivers programmes and activities that are designed to alleviate the impact of poverty, with a focus on families, food and fuel.



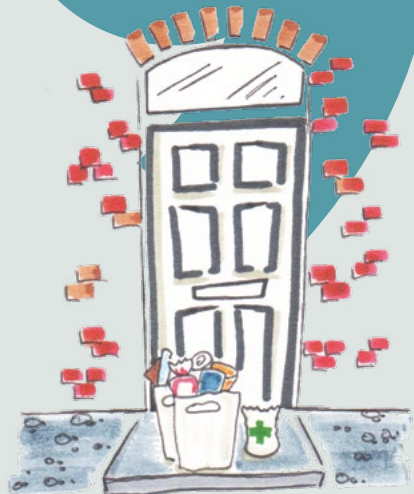
The Project operates a crisis fund all year round, and as lockdown restrictions came into place, it became clear that this would bring extra financial pressure for some families. We wanted to make sure provision was available for people already struggling, and for those plunged into difficult circumstances.

We are very fortunate to work with many great organisations, and with their help, we were able to extend the reach of the crisis fund, providing food vouchers to families impacted by job losses, reduced income and other additional costs. We sought new ways to support families struggling with the cost of fuel; and through the use of vouchers and online/phone top ups, help was offered to those in need.

We are very grateful to funders and donors for their generous contributions to the crisis funding.

The community spirit that inspired so many acts of kindness during lockdown was something special, and the coordinated work of community organisations providing support for local people was wonderful.

*The community spirit that inspired so many acts of kindness during lockdown was something special...*





## SHORT STRAND COMMUNITY FORUM

For Short Strand Community Forum, Covid-19 first impacted our local area around St. Patrick's Day, which is when we shut down. We had to immediately think of how we could provide our services, and we also had to take into account what we delivered to meet the needs of local people.



So, without delay the Short Strand Community Forum has delivered:

- 800 food parcels
- 300 floral baskets
- 120 design your scrubs
- 100 toddler dental packs
- 100 hula hoops
- 200 footballs
- 300 Easter egg trees (project)
- 50 daily calls made to senior citizens
- 10 prescription pickups weekly
- dedicated daily phone service
- daily shopping for those shielding
- online entertainment (facebook)

“

*We had to immediately think of how we could provide our services, and we also had to take into account what we delivered to meet the needs of local people.*



Thank you to Belfast City Council and East Belfast Coronavirus Community Support for supplying us with the food packs, 30 food packs given over to the elderly and vulnerable in the area.



## TULLYCARNET ACTION GROUP INITIATIVE TRUST TAGIT

Tullycarnet Action Group Initiative Trust TAGIT, in partnership with Tullycarnet Neighbourhood Collective, and supported by East Belfast Coronavirus Community support team and Belfast City Council, was able to deliver over 350 food parcels, 46 Prescriptions, and educational tools for kids.



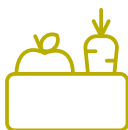
In April 2020, when lockdown was in force, we developed a database of local residents who were shielding due to COVID-19. We found after a few deliveries that we weren't only delivering food parcels, but we were also making a real social impact on the residents. For some of them, seeing our volunteers arriving at their door, was the only time they had contact with anyone, and this service was invaluable to them and their families. Regular contact was really important to the residents and we did this by providing online support through social media, telephone contact and the hotline number provided by the Community Support team. This made the residents feel more confident that they weren't going to be left at home without any support.

A real positive to come out of this experience is that it has brought the community of Tullycarnet even closer.

We have developed a stronger community team of residents and volunteers, which is truly invaluable.



*A real positive to come out of this experience is that it has brought the community of Tullycarnet even closer.*



## ULSTER TOWER STREET COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

In late March 2020, Ulster Tower Street Community Development Association was contacted by EBCDA to become part of the East Belfast Local response team. The purpose was to provide a co-ordinated response to the COVID-19 threat by helping the local community.

During that time, members of Ulster Tower Street Community Development Association delivered over 400 food parcels within the Newtownards Road area, responded to telephone referrals for prescription collections, provided a weekly shopping service, and set up a befriending telephone service, supporting the most vulnerable and isolated within our community.

The support given to our local community would not have been possible without three of our volunteers: John Williamson, Janine Layton and Carla Hart, who were on the ground everyday providing these services.

We would like to give a big thanks to Habinteg Housing Association, for allowing us to use their Community Hub, located in Duke street, and a huge thanks to all our residents for how well they responded to COVID-19, and helped to stop the spread.



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We would like to give a big thanks to Habinteg Housing Association, for allowing us to use their Community Hub, located in Duke street, and a huge thanks to all our residents for how well they responded to COVID-19...



## WANDSWORTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

During the coronavirus pandemic, Wandsworth Community Association embarked on a new project called Food Bank. This project responded to the needs of our local community, during this difficult time of national emergency.



Food Bank has overseen the delivery of 137 weekly parcels of essential items to those members of the community who need them most, namely: those who are medically vulnerable and are therefore shielding under doctors' advice, those who are isolated and without the support of family and friends, as well as individuals and families who have been negatively impacted financially as a result of the pandemic.

The parcels contained a wide range of essential items, including: fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, bread, canned foods, toiletries and cleaning products. Over the 18 weeks, our committed volunteers gave up their time to order and purchase

stock, as well as organising, packing and delivering parcels to households across East Belfast, whilst strictly abiding to government and public health guidance.

Grants and funding from the NIHE and Tesco greatly complemented the contributions already provided by EBCDA/EBCCS, through Belfast City Council, and therefore, helped make this project possible. Feedback from residents receiving the parcels highlighted how much they appreciated the level of support that we provided. It is fantastic to see the positive impact that we have been able to make under such challenging circumstances.



*Over the 18 weeks, our committed volunteers gave up their time to order and purchase stock, as well as organising, packing and delivering parcels to households across East Belfast...*





## WILLOWFIELD PARISH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Staff and volunteers from Willowfield Parish Community Association worked tirelessly during lockdown, serving not just our normal service users, but also identifying and supporting the vulnerable and those most at risk in our community.

We formed a small team of volunteers and made weekly phone calls to the elderly and those who were self-isolating, to check in, offer support and pray. We were inundated with referrals for food parcels, and distributed more parcels in the first eight weeks of lockdown than we did throughout the whole of 2019. We also formed part of the East Belfast Coronavirus Community Response, helping to cover the Woodstock and Ravenhill areas, which mainly involved shopping and collecting prescriptions for those sheltering.

Our Kids + Youth staff team delivered over 200 activity packs to homes at the beginning of lockdown, and kept in contact with kids, young people and families. In addition, we were able to provide second-hand furniture to people in need from our Fresh Start furniture project, including a sofa, two fridge freezers, a cooker and a microwave oven. We even managed to re-home a cat for someone! Personally, it has been a privilege to have been part of such a great team.



*Our Kids + Youth staff team delivered over 200 activity packs to homes at the beginning of lockdown, and kept in contact with kids, young people and families.*



## WHATSAPP QUOTES

### PARTNERSHIP:

Thank you to Belfast City Council and East Belfast Coronavirus Community Support for supplying us with the food packs, 30 food packs given over to the elderly and vulnerable in the area also like to thank 4 of our local volunteer's who went that extra step to put together 60 + packs for the kids including an Easter egg for every child ,sweets , colouring books, treats and a time capsule project (all paid for by themselves) so yesterday we done near 100 packs to near every household in this small community, a long day but well worth it

fantastic, well done to all involved

Well done

Well done to all involved, great job!

Folks would there be takers for leftovers from the east/north and west soup deliveries?

If there's soup left and it would keep until tomorrow we would take it

Fab, I'll pass your details on

Thanks. Thinking it could do our wee pensioners for lunch tomorrow. I can go and collect it

Is anyone around Forestside, could pick up a prescription please to come back to Mersey street area

I could sort this for you send me details

Just got sorted, thanks, I will probably come back to you though

No problems I am out and about today if anything needs done

Good morning folks would any of ur groups like some home made scones for our pensioners this coming week.

Wee Riah is still baking away and would like to give them to any of our older residents who might like some

We would take some, what a great kid

Wee Riah is a local hero, the take up for support in our area still remains low so I think we are ok

I will take some off you. Thanx.

I have a fridge freezer in our storage container which someone donated a couple of weeks ago. It would need collected though.

amazing

Fab, will get back to you about a van

You guys are all amazing, is there anything or any situation you can't respond to

Just had a call from the response team about wee lady in our area, one of our volunteers is going to head out now and do a wee shop for her, was nearly in bits listening to her on the phone

Isn't it heart-breaking listening to them you don't realise how many people in this world don't actually have anyone. I feel well and truly blessed with the many of them that have said "god bless u" or you'll be rewarded in heaven god luv them

I'm going to keep their wee numbers and give them a wee phone call daily see how their getting on x

That's lovely xx

Guys it's amazing what you are all doing. Maybe that wee lady could be referred to Good morning project

Hi guys is there anyone covering Inverary area with regular support re food etc?

If you take a look at the Google spreadsheet you'll see what groups in areas have received non-perishable food parcels for distribution

Ok thanks

If there is a request for food from Inverary could you also log it with the helpline numbers also?

Will do

Is anyone able to cover Orby/ Orangefield? Doesn't seem to be anyone we can see on the list. - call came into community response line for it

Give me the details and I will sort it now

I've messaged the details

Done

I will check with a Church in that area for future contact

The (Name of Church) and & the (Name of Church) would be worth contacting as well

I will contact (Name of Church) now

Brill thanks, I've contacted few folks at (Name of Church) as well

## NETWORKING:

We have a request through the helpline today for a double mattress. All help appreciated as always

We actually have a spare mattress at our house that we have been unable to get rid of. In good condition, but nowhere for it in the house. If someone was able to provide collection (my car not big enough), my wife and I would be happy to donate

We'll get it picked up, thank you

## THANKS

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As with all these types of programmes, there are a lot of people involved in making it happen and delivering things on the ground. We want to thank all of the volunteers and local community coordinators in all of the organisations involved. There were many other individuals, groups and organisations who assisted in the East Belfast response to Covid-19 and supported those involved in EBCSS. To all those who played their part, however large or small, we say thank you. Your spirit, enthusiasm, heart for community and commitment to people is an inspiration to East Belfast and indeed Belfast.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Ardcarn Local Residents Group             | Eastside Learning   |
| BT8 Coronavirus Community Outreach        | East Belfast Surestart  |
| BT16 Community Outreach                   | East Belfast Mission (EBM)  |
| BDACT Connections                         | Elim Church (Beersbridge)   |
| BHSCT Community Development Team          | Engage With Age   |
| Ballybeen Improvement Group               | Garnerville Presbyterian  |
| Ballybeen Womens Centre                   | Grace Avenue Residents  |
| Ballymac Friendship Centre                | Helping Hands Belfast   |
| Bloomfield Community Association          | Island Street City Mission  |
| Bloomfield Methodist Church               | Knock Churches Community Support                                      |
| Branial Community Association             | Knocknagoney Coronavirus Support                                      |
| Ballymacarrett No6 District               | Lagan Village Youth & Community Group                                 |
| Compassion Church Belfast                 | Ledley Hall Boys and Girls Club                                       |
| Clarawood Community Church                | Megain Nazarene Church  |
| Clonduff Community Association            | Mersey Street Presbyterian  |
| Connswater Community Centre               | Mountpottinger Presbyterian Church                                    |
| Christian Fellowship Church               | Norwood Neighbourhood Watch   |
| Cregagh Community Association             | Oasis Caring in Action  |
| East Belfast Community Development Agency | Orangefield Presbyterian Church                                       |
| East Belfast Alternatives                 | Residents Association of Cherryvalley, Kensington and Shandon (RACKS) |
| East Belfast Community Counselling        | Rosetta Area Community Support  |
| East Belfast Act Initiative               | Scaffolding Project   |
| East Belfast Independent Advice Centre    |   |

Short Strand Community Forum  
Short Strand Partnership  
Strand Presbyterian Church  
Sydenham Methodist  
St Brendans Church  
St Clements Parish  
St John's Orangefield  
St Mark's Church of Ireland The Gathering,  
St Patricks Church  
The Reach Project  
The Larder  
Templemore Avenue School Trust/East  
Belfast Network Centre  
Tullycarnet Action Group Initiative Trust  
TAGIT  
Ulster Tower Street Community  
Development Association  
Walkway Community Association  
Wandsworth Community Association  
Westbourne Presbyterian Church  
Willowfield Parish Community Association  
Youth Initiatives (East Belfast)

**To the Lord Lieutenant for the County Borough of Belfast, Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle CBE, The Lord Mayor of Belfast Alderman Frank McCoubrey, Gavin Robinson MP, Deirdre Hargey MLA and Carál Ní Chuilín MLA** in their respective roles as Communities Minister.

To all East Belfast MLA's, East Belfast Councillors for supporting the work of our group and their active support in communities throughout East Belfast.

Our thanks to the staff involved from **Belfast City Council** and the **Department for Communities** in making the process of accessing the funding so easy and for their ongoing support during the delivery of our programme.

To **Allied Bakeries**, who provided 12 weekly donations of 100 loaves that were distributed within the network each week.

**WeBottle** for their donation of bottles of hand sanitizer and for agreeing a very competitive price when we had to purchase large quantities. **James Brown and Sons** for their donation to have pre-loved school uniforms cleaned for redistribution.

And last, but by no means least, to the **residents of East Belfast** who came in contact with the members of the groups and who, on every occasion have shown great courtesy and unending thanks for the work and support throughout East Belfast.



Department for  
**Communities**



**Belfast**  
City Council



**ALLIED BAKERIES**



**James Brown & Sons**  
Funeral Directors



EAST BELFAST  
**A Connected  
Community**

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For further information please contact:

**East Belfast Community  
Development Agency**

East Belfast Network Centre  
55 Templemore Avenue  
Belfast BT5 4FG  
Tel 028 9045 1512  
Email [info@ebcda.org](mailto:info@ebcda.org)  
**[ebcda.org](http://ebcda.org)**

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EAST BELFAST  
**Coronavirus  
Community  
Support Group**



Department for  
**Communities**



**Belfast  
City Council**