

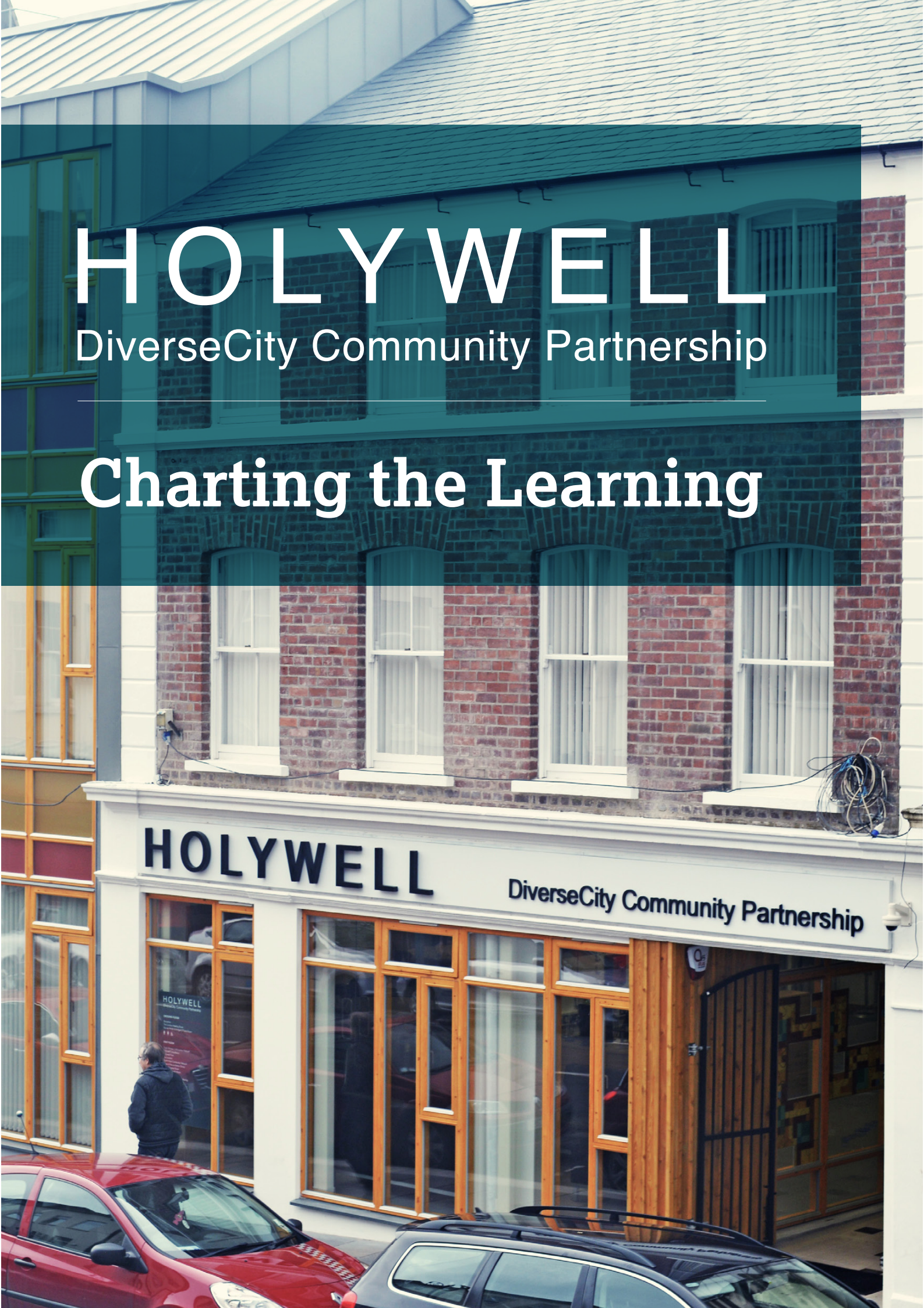
# HOLYWELL

DiverseCity Community Partnership

## Charting the Learning

HOLYWELL

DiverseCity Community Partnership





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# HOLYWELL

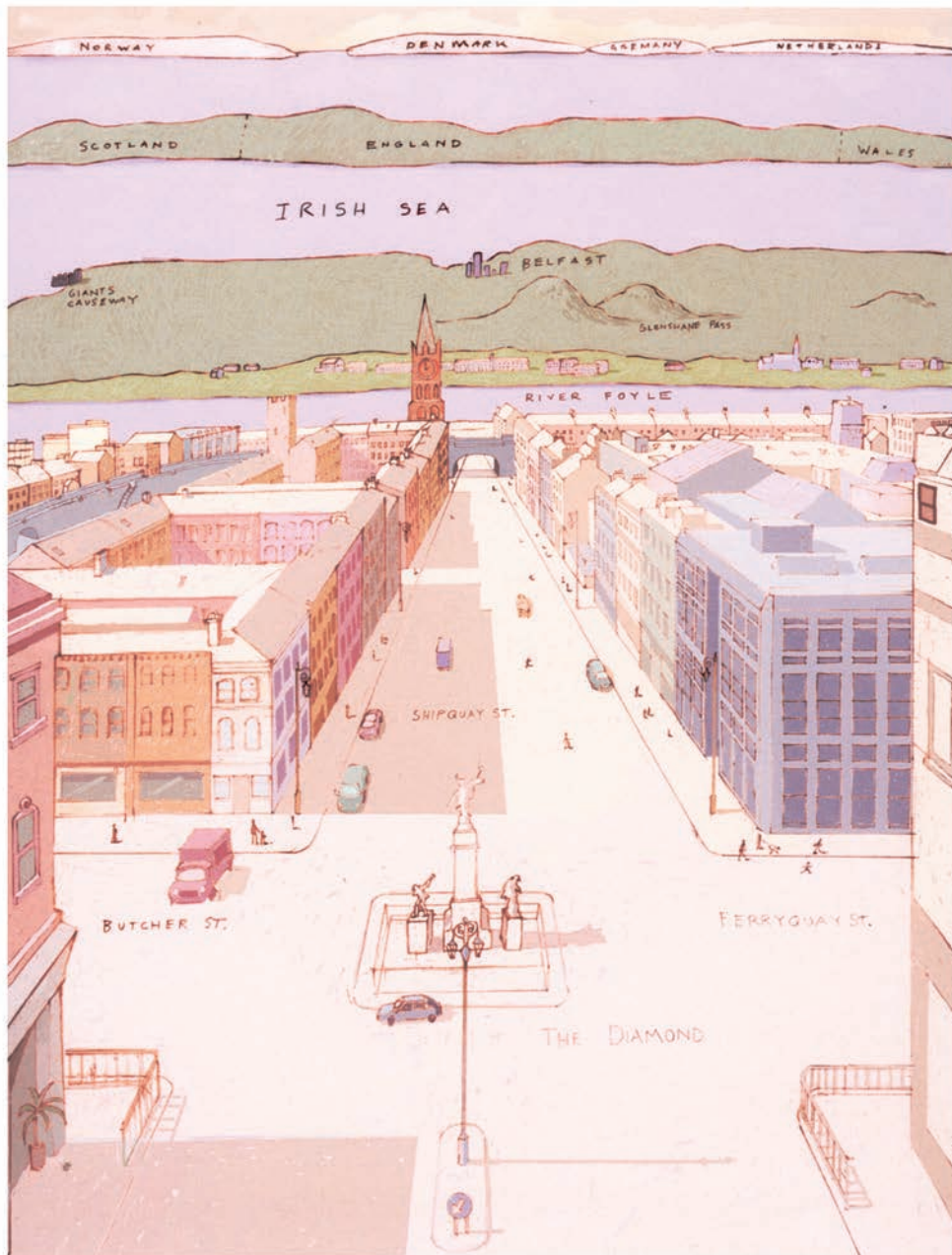
DiverseCity Community Partnership

## Charting the Learning

### Contents

- 5. Introduction and why this publication
- 8. DiverseCity Community Partnership  
The Story So Far
- 11. The Partnership Agreement
- 12. Key Findings and Learning
- 24. Timeline

# DIVERSECITY



“ If you bring the appropriate people together in constructive ways with good information, they will create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of the organisation or community.”

David D Chrislop,  
'Collaborative Leadership' 1994

## Introduction and why this publication

The DiverseCity Community Partnership (DCCP), known as the Walled City Community Partnership until June 2012, started in 2005. For the past ten years the partners have engaged in a lengthy, challenging and thoughtful development process which led to the creation of a state-of-the-art building - the first truly 'shared' premises within the city walls. Reaching this stage took a long time, with considerable collective effort and necessitating high levels of collaborative working.

Finally housed in the new premises those involved have an even greater opportunity to realise their potential as partners going forward. With a

commitment to shared future and modelling effective and efficient ways of working in partnership DCCP are aiming to continue to demonstrate how to create collaborative advantage.

This publication is the latest in a series outlining the work, *DiverseCity I*, *Diverse City II* and *Diverse City III*. They told the story of development as it unfolded, dealt with progress and showed the links to relevant strategy documents including, *One City One Voice One Plan* and *Together Building a United Community*. *DiverseCity III* also flagged up a series of innovative and potentially transformative proposals and recommendations for the city.



During the 90's there was a growing trend towards partnership working. Partnerships were often set up quickly with a view to accessing short-term funding. The idea of broader, more formal partnerships and collaborations made many people and groups anxious, often fuelled by negative past experiences. Partnerships/collaborations, whether at a resource sharing level right up to and including something like a formal merger throw up many barriers and challenges - differing value bases, principles and ethos; a variety of internal structures and systems; how would budgets be developed and managed and where would power live within the Partnership and what might it look like? Groups tend not to focus on the positive potential of this as a sustainable way of working.

Charting the Learning is a summary of the 10 year history of the DiverseCity Community Partnership. The story is particular to this partnership but the many experiences and learning can be shared with others who may be considering embarking on a similar course.

To determine the key learning from the partnership process a joint workshop and a series of individual meetings with key individuals from partner organisations were held during February and March 2015 to elicit their experience to date and what lessons they deemed important to share with others. Holywell Trust, The Junction and the Peace and Reconciliation (PRG) group kick started the process. In time there followed a discussion with a range of other organisations about sharing resources, ideas and contacts.





## DiverseCity Community Partnership The story so far...



The best adventures often start in conversation and the development of **DCCP** certainly ticks that box. The Junction, Holywell Trust and the Peace and Reconciliation Group (PRG) began a dialogue in 2005; all were funded by the Community Relations Council. The issue under discussion, ‘might a single entity be more likely to secure longer term funding?’

This led to a vision of sharing premises and the formation of the Walled City Community Partnership. The Department of Social Development (DSD) called for applications to the Modernisation Fund. An application for a feasibility study was made in January 2006. The application was rejected but interest in the concept remained and the Partners agreed to continue the conversation.

By 2007 the vision had taken shape with those involved more firmly enrolled in it. Time had allowed for a deeper insight into the work of each of the organisations leading to a shared understanding and appreciation of the work involved in bringing the idea to life. Holywell Trust was selected as the agreed lead partner (supported by Holywell Consultancy), developing discussion papers, convening residents and making applications.

A bid made in response to the second call from the DSD's Modernisation Fund – alongside an application to International Fund for Ireland (IFI) Legacy Fund, led to DSD and IFI agreeing to take the project to economic appraisal stage.

Following successful completion of this IFI were first to commit, agreeing to the rebuild/refurbishment of 10-14 Bishop Street on condition that the Modernisation Fund commit to substantially grant aiding the purchase of the buildings from the Inner City Trust. This was arrived at in 2010. On 11 March 2010 Margaret Ritchie MLA, Minister for Social Development handed over the keys to the project to the Chairman of Holywell Trust, Willie O'Donnell.

The funding had been secured and the premises purchased, it had only taken five years! No time to rest upon laurels – there was still so much more to do beginning with the appointment of a professional firm to undertake the building works. Applications were also successful to the Arts Council NI (for art installations within the building) and NW PEACE III Partnership (for furniture and equipment). The building work was set to start in 2012 and complete in 2013.

Partnership member groups made way for heavy plant machinery by shifting to temporary premises at The Diamond - close by where they could keep an eye on the birthing of the new building.

Building works were completed in December 2013 and the building was formally launched in June 2014. The DCCP member organisations now have the platform from which to deliver their work.

### Current DCCP member Organisations

- Holywell Trust (lead partner)
- Dog Ears
- Extern
- Foyle Women's Information Network
- Holywell Consultancy
- North West Community Network
- Reach Across



- The Junction
- Towards Understanding & Healing



### Associate Groups (groups that share space with us but that are not full members)

- Teenage Kickz
- Trufflepig



### The Partnership Agreement:

Each of the partnership organisations unanimously agree to work together to:

1. Develop an innovative, collaborative culture and to develop new models of working together.
2. Commit to partnership working – exploring amalgamations and other possible arrangement for inter-organisational work.
3. Jointly manage DCCP resources.
4. Share facilities including management, administration and finance.
5. Explore joint purchasing arrangements for mutual benefit.
6. Record and openly share our process as an innovative model.
7. Work towards the development of a DiverseCity within the Walls through the partnership.
8. Evaluate the work of the DCCP at an annual review point.

### In addition the following commitments are also implicit within our partnership:

1. To honour and nurture friendships.
2. To hold difficult conversations in a respectful manner.
3. To share space, resources, ideas, information, activities and enjoyment. To create a wealth beyond commercial economic values.
4. To work together to achieve the aims of each of our individual organisations.
5. To support each other to identify and act on opportunities arising from working together.
6. To work together for practical positive change.
7. The Partnership brings additional refreshment, inspiration and excitement to our own work.
8. To model the type of society in which we want to live:
  - To proactively challenge all forms of discrimination and inequality.
  - Celebrate difference – everyone is treated with respect.
  - Practice equality and justice.
  - Promote positive health and well being.



## **Key Findings... The Partnership development to date has had four distinct elements:**

- 1) Building the Partnership
- 2) Living and working together in the building
- 3) Sustaining the work, the organisations, the partnership and the building
- 4) Community relations impact and potential of the partnership.





Back in 2005 the process of developing the vision for the DiverseCity Community Partnership sparked by Eamonn Deane, Director of Holywell Trust for many years. Throughout the process of gathering the learning many people referred to the need for strong leadership and felt Eamonn ably demonstrated the skills and qualities associated with what would become, and continues to be, a very facilitative and democratic process. They asked for it to be noted.

Following the early conversations between Holywell Trust, The Junction and the Peace and Reconciliation Group the idea was explored at a series of residencies with a broader group drawn from potential partner organisations. This was an attempt to maximise participation in the early development and build agreement on key decisions going forward. The more parties involved in a collaboration the more complex the negotiations required and the greater the need to work on relationships and jointly owned process. Every effort was made to work in this way.

### What worked?

Partners agreed that in order to build the collaborative climate, commitment and ownership within and between partners there was a heavy emphasis on continual consultation, residencies, discussion papers, individual and joint meetings. There was consensus that in order to stay fully informed it was important to engage in all these ways. The process of building the partnership in the early stages was time heavy but everyone felt it was absolutely necessary.

*A few people talked about “the need to go slow to go fast.”*

“The ‘Vision’ once clear helped consolidate commitment.”

*“The process felt genuine and authentic.”*

“An ambitious development like this needs strong leadership and that was clearly present.”

*Most felt they were ‘practicing what many of them were preaching’ – actively modelling a new way of working. People felt energised, excited (and challenged) by it.*

### Challenges:

Initially some people felt the process seemed to belong to an enthusiastic few. They said it was important to be heard and in time they were, adding that it may have been more to do with their lack of confidence than any attempt to side-line them.

Communication within individual groups left some of their staff and committee members less aware of the partnership development process. This led to frustrations and highlighted a need for making sure information flowed in many ways to avoid issues of detachment and feelings of isolation.

Some felt there were power differentials but when probed were actually describing aspects of leadership. This in turn confirmed the need for managing and guiding partners through the development stage, a role taken on by Holywell Trust (supported by Holywell Consultancy).

The process was time heavy which led to concern that the everyday work of the Partners might be neglected.

The differing levels of decision-making power within the partners slowed the process down. Many needed to relay information back and forwards to committee/board members.





## Living and working together in the building

### What worked?



People are still excited about working in a state of the art building, they love the space, the light, the integrated art. They feel it is good for their health, a 'healthy building'. Some spoke about it being a 'social building'.



Most people talked about the ‘open plan’ nature of it leading to a deepening of relationships across organisations.

It is easier to make links and develop joint projects because people can see and hear some of each other’s business.

The building, and indeed the whole process, reflects the professionalism within the community and voluntary sector in the North West. It is a symbol of confidence in collaborative working and shared future.

Relationships have been deepened between the member groups – additional work has already been developed and delivered that would not have taken place if it were not for the partnership.

A new specifically designed, shared space has been developed within the city centre – a space already synonymous with the delivery of high quality, important and relevant community relations and community development activity.

Development of the building has helped to positively transform the city centre – now a more vibrant place.

The building is a visible manifestation of the community sector in the North West. It shows how important the sector is to the local community – apart from the work they deliver the partners are important employers.

The mechanisms inbuilt within the partnership has helped to support organisations through challenging times. During the development process the management structure of the lead partner, Holywell Trust, was changed. This was key in the development of the

partnership process. As lead partner Holywell Trust is the organisation that owns the HOLYWELL – DiverseCity Community Partnership building. To reflect the partnership all of the original trustees of the Trust stepped down and were replaced by new trustees – one from each of the DCCP member groups. Holywell changed the ownership dynamic.

### **Challenges:**

Negotiating space in an open plan environment anywhere is often problematic for a range of reasons. People get fixated on the need for dividing walls and structures, some will struggle to adjust depending on their privacy needs especially those who have had their own offices beforehand.

Early delight with open plan working led to the space being much more social and people highlighted how difficult it can be to have a telephone conversation if there is excess noise close by. Some said they still feel self-conscious speaking on the telephone. Tasks that demand a high level of concentration can also be difficult due to noise spill and general comings and goings. Some of these issues have been resolved simply by noticing the rhythm of the work going on in the space and tailoring tasks to suit, booking individual time in one of the break-out spaces or finding quiet corners when needed. The need for flexibility and creativity again highlighted in response to dilemmas of this kind. People on the whole did feel it was getting easier.

All those interviewed spoke of the need for compromise during negotiations over space.

Some groups gave up some facilities and services in order to be part of the partnership process. While continuing to be a challenge it is one they will continue to make to remain involved. The ability to think creatively is a useful skill at such times.

Early teething problems with the building and services (e.g. phones and IT networking) while frustrating for some have since been resolved.

### **Sustaining the work, the organisations, the partnership and the building**

The community and voluntary sector is going through massive changes with seemingly day on day cuts to funding. Much of the work is under threat and organisations are increasingly finding themselves working at risk. Many of the DCCP organisations have been accessing money through the same funders. It transpired recently that several applications had been submitted to the same funder from organisations involved in the DiverseCity Community Partnership. An example perhaps of everyone ploughing their own furrows. Once known it was accepted that members should review this practice and seek to find ways to move forward collectively where and when appropriate.

While some of the partners continue to tender for individual pieces of work, every effort is being made to design, consolidate and collaborate which raises the often prickly question about who will become the ‘lead partner’ when bidding. It is an important issue and one the Partnership will continually come up against going forward. Holywell Trust is the agreed lead partner of the partnership

but there is an acceptance that the Trust does not need to lead up every project or initiative. Agreement exists that the discussion will be had in an open, respectful and frank manner. Funding across a number of organisations will bring a new complexity but Partners are certainly open to it.

Among other things responsibility for running the building and consolidating the work of the Partnership falls to Holywell Trust as lead partner the reigns of the organisation have been passed to Gerard Deane who plays a pivotal role in all of the above. Holywell Trust are responsible for ensuring the costs associated with running the building are met while holding fast to the values and principles at the heart of the Partnership – co-operation and sharing, building and inspiring the community sector to become more independent and confident.

### **Community relations impact and potential of the partnership.**

The DiverseCity Community Partnership brings together a diverse range of groups working on a plethora of issues right across the community and voluntary sector. The opportunities for cross-working are right there – in the same building with relationships already established, trust already built, infrastructure and systems in place. Most of the partners have been directly engaged in community relations work for many years therefore within the partnership there is a vast wealth of knowledge and experience.

The expertise already exists among partners to build effective and efficient programmes of work. Some joint work has already happened between Foyle



Women's Information Network and The Junction. This will doubtless increase going forward.

A positive track record exists with many funders who know the partnership has the capacity to deal with all levels of funding.

The building is a confident and unapologetic statement about moving

forward into a shared future – a place of equality, diversity and inter-dependence.

Partnership members - Foyle Women's Information Network and the North West Community Network link with hundreds of other organisations. This increases the potential impact of the work of DCCP. It takes time and resources to build partnerships and collaborations – “go slow to go fast”.



## Summary: Messages for others...

Buy-in from the leadership of each partner organisation is critical to success.

Have an acceptance upfront that the process will have challenges and there will be need for a high level of flexibility and compromise.

Ideally – secure or commit financial resources to the process – at times money is needed to carry out key tasks or to pay for an independent eye.

Ensure the presence of key leadership skills – ensuring equality and managing diversity and difficulty.

Clarify expectations, roles and responsibilities from the outset of the process.

Acknowledge and appreciate others experience.

Learn how to set aside your own agenda.

Learn as much as possible about the other organisations – their aims, values, ethos etc.

Don't dodge the issue of power – name it and address it.

Create a collaborative climate and atmosphere of mutual respect.

Develop a communication plan, always work at strengthening communication.

Encourage honesty about needs and concerns.

Create a structure that is fit for purpose using sub-groups with the appropriate people populating them.

Support each other to take risks and don't fear failure, learn from it.

Share information and knowledge.

Build fluid processes.

Work at consensus or at the very least make decisions people can live with.

Time and space – must be created for collaborative planning.





## Non-negotiables for building successful partnerships...

### Openness

All work and relationship building must happen in a space of openness – there should be no secrets within a partnership. This will help to build and develop trust which is crucial to sustaining relationships in the longer term.

### Mutual Benefit

Where possible the needs of all partner organisations should be considered. People need to feel they are benefitting directly from the efforts they make to support the partnership.

### Generosity

Key to building the relationship within our partnership was the generosity of the partners involved. All committed time and resources to the process which was clearly valued by everyone involved.

### Enthusiasm and energy

Where this exists it makes all things easier, more joyful. It builds positive momentum.

## Keeping an eye on the prize

The ability to lift your head from the work-a-day issues, to see yourself and the work of your organisation as part of something greater, a new way of relating. It is pioneering, transformative and exciting.

## ...and finally.

Partners must share responsibility for success, should pay attention to achieving the results while at the same time continually monitoring and reviewing the processes used to get them. Key to creating something people will be happy to engage with again and again is the state of the relationships. How people experience each other, how they relate to the organisation, how they feel about their involvement and contribution. Balancing results, process and relationship creates sustainable organisational change with greater participant satisfaction. Whatever the starting point - always seek to improve.

“ It isn’t always possible to stay on the ‘scenic route’ when working in partnership but as long as there are fair and equitable processes, clear roles and responsibilities and a commitment to building positive working relationships then the ‘hard road’ should be less and less travelled. ”





# DiverseCity Community Partnership

## Timeline - Key Stages

### 2005

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- Holywell Trust, The Junction and Peace & Reconciliation Group begin discussion on partnership working

### 2006

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- Bid submitted to Modernisation Fund for shared building - unsuccessful
- Selection of Holywell Trust as lead partner

### 2007

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- Funding applications for new building submitted to DSD Modernisation Fund, IFI Legacy Fund and Peace III
- Partnership members at this stage - Holywell Trust (lead partner), Community Development Learning Initiative, Derry Healthy Cities, Extern, Holywell Consultancy, North West Community Network, Peace & Reconciliation Group, REACH Across, The Junction, Towards Understanding & Healing and Yes! Publications
- Peace III Application was unsuccessful
- DSD & IFI bids selected for economic appraisal

### 2008

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- Work carried out on economic appraisal - accepted by both IFI & DSD who allocated resources to the building project

### 2009

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- Publication at start of year of 'DiverseCity' outlining the concept of the creation of a Walled City Neighbourhood and the work of the partnership
- Partnership Residential 1
- Publication of 'DiverseCity II' in December outlining the aims and objectives of the partnership and the work of each of the partner organisations

### 2010

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- Resources secured from Building Change Trust to support the development of the partnership over a two year period
- Appointment of team to oversee the development of the building

### 2011

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- Appointment of builders for building
- Partner organisations relocated to The Diamond to allow for the demolition of buildings at 10-14 Bishop Street
- Partnership Residential 2
- Foyle Women's Information Network becomes a full partner of the Partnership

### 2012

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- Building works begin
- Holywell Trust - trustees are replaced with representatives from each of the partner organisations
- Partnership Residential 3
- Partnership changes its name from Walled City Community Partnership to DiverseCity Community Partnership

### 2013

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- Building works completed in December 2013
- Partnership Residentials 4 & 5

### 2014

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- Publication of 'DiverseCity III' outlining the partnership member groups and the joint future aspirations of the partnership
- Building launched in June 2014
- Partnership Residential 6
- Ongoing partnership development







## **Charting the Learning**



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