

ARC NI CONFERENCE



# TIME TRAVEL THROUGH THE CRYSTAL LABYRINTH

DUNADRY HOTEL, ANTRIM  
FRIDAY 7TH MARCH 2025  
FROM 9AM-5PM

#ARCNICONF2025 #25YRSSTRONG #TIMETRAVELUNITED

SPONSORED BY



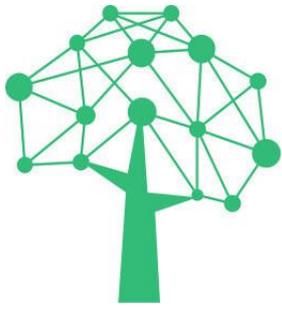


RISK MANAGEMENT AND COMMERCIAL INSURANCE

**Knowledge You Can Trust™**

Find your solution at [bbrown.com/eu](http://bbrown.com/eu)





# PROFILETREE

WEB DESIGN AND DIGITAL MARKETING

**ProfileTree** prides itself on delivering expert digital marketing, website development, and AI implementation, helping organisations stay ahead of digital trends. Their team consists of marketers, designers, writers, website developers and video producers who work together to provide full-service solutions engineered for real results. What sets ProfileTree apart is its unique approach to digital growth.

They offer a personalised approach, conducting full audits of current marketing strategies and website audits, as well as training on how to implement an effective digital strategy that generates real results.

With a focus on organic growth and a commitment to staying at the forefront of digital opportunities, ProfileTree continues to help charities and social enterprises transform their online presence and achieve their digital goals.

## Let's build your digital brand!

McSweeney Centre

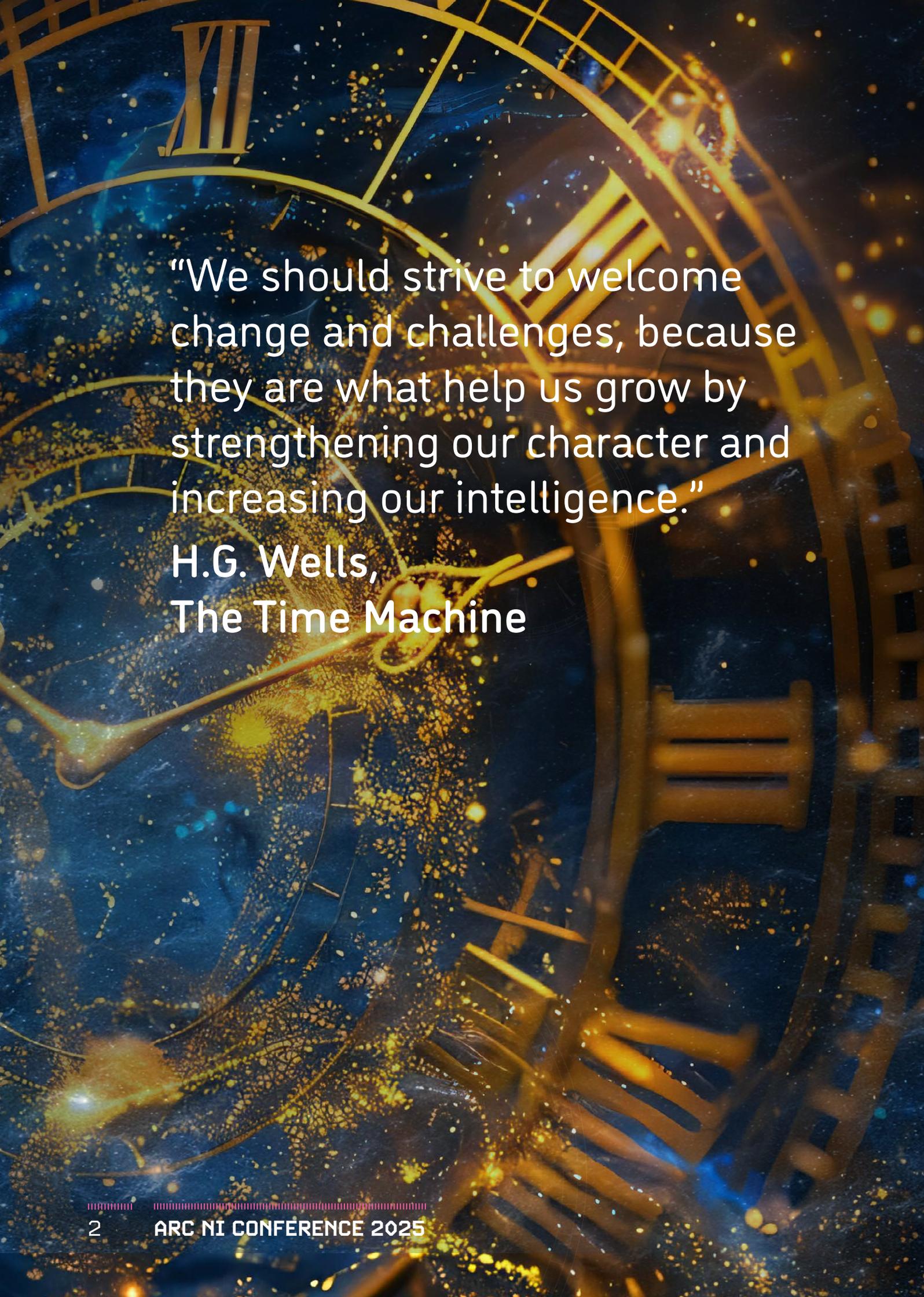
31 Henry Place

Belfast BT15 2AY

**Tel:** 028 9568 0364

**General:** [hello@profieltree.com](mailto:hello@profieltree.com)





“We should strive to welcome change and challenges, because they are what help us grow by strengthening our character and increasing our intelligence.”

H.G. Wells,  
The Time Machine

# WELCOME

On behalf of ARC NI, I would like to warmly welcome you to our conference which plans to travel back in time, look at the present and think about the future.

The Association for Real Change (ARC) is a UK-based national charity established in 1976. Originally named the Association of Residential Communities for the Retarded, we underwent several name changes, reflecting evolving societal perspectives and terminologies. In 1999 ARC arrived in NI as the Association for Residential Care, and ultimately adopted our current name in 2003 to emphasise our commitment to meaningful transformation in the sector.

All too often, we forget about the progress achieved as we focus on what more needs to be done. Based on the science fiction novel called 'The Time Machine', today we will acknowledge the past, celebrate the present and plan a future where our shared hopes and aspirations can be fulfilled by working together.

We will consider what more can be done to improve the equality and inclusion of people with a learning disability, autism and other support needs.

But in true ARC NI style, and of course because this is our birthday, we will have lots of fun and games to help us celebrate throughout the day. So join in and share your views, make new friends and most importantly lets laugh and talk together about what the future holds! Finally, this conference has only been possible through the hard work and support of many whom I would like to sincerely thank.

- » Our Sponsors namely Brown & Brown UK; Department of Health; and ProfileTree.
- » Our Speakers and Workshop Facilitators, for their time and contributions.
- » Our Planning Committee, specifically Adele Leighton; Dr Agnes Lunny OBE; Claire Berry; Janet Schofield; and Lizzie Dixon.
- » Our Experts By Experience (TILII) who keep us grounded and guide us daily.
- » The ARC NI team who have worked tirelessly and creatively to make today happen.
- » Staff at the Dunadry Hotel for their patience and hard work.

In the words of H.G Wells, "Face this world. Learn its ways, watch it, and be careful not to be too quick to guess its meaning."

Because today we can find the clues to it all.

**Leslie-Anne Newton**  
Director

## SPONSORED BY



# PROGRAMME

TIME	EVENT	PLACE
08:45am	<b>REGISTRATION</b> Refreshments	Reception
09:30am	<b>"HUMANITY IS STRONG, ENERGETIC, AND INTELLIGENT."</b> <b>Leslie-Anne Newton, ARC (NI) Director &amp; Catherine Orr, TILII</b> Setting the context of why we are here today	Ballroom
09:40am	<b>"THEY WERE PUT INTO MY POCKETS, WHEN I TRAVELLED INTO TIME."</b> <b>Camilla Kvalheim, CEO &amp; Editor in Chief, TV BRA</b> Camilla and her staff will tell us about their Norwegian TV streaming platform that between 4-5,000 people tune into every week	Ballroom
10:00am	<b>"AND WITH THAT THE TIME TRAVELLER BEGAN HIS STORY."</b> <b>Conference 25 Theatre Company</b> A theatrical play, led by CAN and Kilcreggan showing how things have changed over the past 25 years.	Ballroom
10:30am	<b>"ANY REAL BODY MUST HAVE EXTENSION IN FOUR DIRECTIONS: IT MUST HAVE LENGTH, BREADTH, THICKNESS AND DURATION."</b> <b>Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission NI</b> Geraldine will provide her reflections of the UNCRPD and how this has improved the lives of people with a learning disability, autism and other support needs.	Ballroom
10:40am	<b>BREAK</b>	Reception
11:00am	<b>"TAKE IT AS A LIE—OR A PROPHECY. SAY I DREAMT IT IN THE WORKSHOP?"</b> Workshops showing how technology can improve the lives of people with a learning disability, autism and other support needs.	

TIME	EVENT	PLACE
12:00pm	<p><b>"YOU MUST FOLLOW ME CAREFULLY. I SHALL HAVE TO CHALLENGE ONE OR TWO IDEAS THAT ARE ALMOST UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED."</b></p> <p>Closing off the past and a bit of birthday fun!</p>	Ballroom
12:45pm	<b>LUNCH</b>	Ballroom
2:00pm	<p><b>"THERE IS NO INTELLIGENCE WHERE THERE IS NO CHANGE AND NO NEED OF CHANGE."</b></p> <p><b>Linda McAuley chairs The NI Government Revolutionary Panel</b></p> <p>A Q&amp;A session chaired by Linda with Government Departments</p>	Ballroom
2:00pm	<p><b>PARALLEL WORLD</b></p> <p><b>Nothing About Us Without Us</b></p> <p>Workshops for people supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Sound &amp; Chill; and Glow &amp; Create Candles</li> <li>» Food Fun; and Tech, Tunes and Plan a Party</li> </ul>	
3:30pm	<p><b>BREAK</b></p> <p>Birthday Cake time!</p>	Ballroom
4:00pm	<p><b>"IT SOUNDS PLAUSIBLE ENOUGH TONIGHT, BUT WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW. WAIT FOR THE COMMON SENSE OF THE MORNING."</b></p> <p><b>Leslie-Anne Newton, ARC (NI) Director &amp; Catherine Orr, TILII</b></p> <p>What will the world look like in another 25 years.</p>	Ballroom
4:30pm	<b>CONFERENCE CLOSE</b>	

"We see some beginnings of this even in our own time, and in this future age it was complete."

# EASY READ AGENDA

	TIME	EVENT	PLACE
	08:45am	<b>Sign in</b> Tea and Coffee	Reception
	09:30am	<b>Welcome</b> <b>Leslie-Anne Newton (ARC NI Director) and Catherine Orr (TILII)</b> Talking about why we are here today.	Ballroom
	09:40am	<b>TV BRA</b> <b>Camilla Kvalheim, (Chief Executive)</b> Talking about a TV channel in Norway led by people with a learning disability.	Ballroom
	10:00am	<b>The past to the present</b> <b>Conference 25 theatre company</b> A play by people with a learning disability to show their personal stories from the past.	Ballroom
	10:30am	<b>Standing up for equal rights!</b> <b>Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission NI</b> We will hear about how the <b>UNCRPD</b> has improved the lives of people with a learning disability, autism and other support needs. <b>UNCRPD – United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an International Agreement.</b>	Ballroom

	TIME	EVENT	PLACE
	10.40am	Break	Reception
	11:00am	<b>Workshops for everyone</b> A. How technology helps us find information about transitions B. Staying safe online C. Care app to stay connected D. Computer program that helps organisations meet peoples needs E. Technology that helps communication	See workshop Easy Read
	12:00pm	<b>Step into the future</b> Leave the past behind!	Ballroom
	12:45pm	Lunch	Ballroom
	2:00pm	<b>Time for questions!</b> <b>Linda McAuley asks the Northern Ireland Government questions</b> This is a chance for you to ask questions and learn more about what they do. For example, health, education and justice. <b>Or you can go to a workshop instead.</b>	Ballroom

# EASY READ AGENDA (CONTINUED)

TIME	EVENT	PLACE
 <p><b>2:00pm</b></p>	<p><b>Workshops for people with a learning disability</b></p> <p>F. Sound and chill, and Glow and create – Relaxing music and Candle making</p> <p>G Food fun, and Tech tunes and plan a party – Healthy food art and DJ Party planning</p>	<p><b>See workshop Easy Read</b></p>
 <p><b>3:30pm</b></p>	<p><b>BREAK</b></p> <p>Birthday Cake time!</p>	<p><b>Ballroom</b></p>
 <p><b>4:00pm</b></p>	<p><b>Let's talk about the future!</b></p> <p><b>Leslie-Anne Newton (ARC NI Director) and Catherine Orr (TILII)</b></p> <p>We will think about what the world will be like in 25 years.</p>	<p><b>Ballroom</b></p>
 <p><b>4:30pm</b></p>	<p><b>The end!</b></p>	
	<p><b>Thank you for coming!</b></p>	

# WORKSHOPS

**\*PLEASE NOTE** that a lift is available to all floors – however there are a number of steps down to the BEETLING Room. This room is not accessible to wheelchair users.

MORNING WORKSHOP	ROOM
<p><b>A</b> <b>"TIME CAN'T BE TURNED OFF – CHANGE STILL GOES ON, EVEN IF YOU DON'T WANT IT TO."</b> <b>Tracey Francis, ARC Scotland</b></p> <p>Facilitated by ARC Scotland, this engaging, hands on workshop will connect attendees and encourage their learning from one another as well as having the chance to explore the Compass transitions tool. With a strong focus on practical applications of digital technology, the workshop will use real-life examples to demonstrate the impact of access to the right information, in the right way, at the right time – and how this information can help Government co-produce future policy.</p>	<b>BALLROOM</b> Ground Floor
<p><b>B</b> <b>"IT IS A LAW OF NATURE WE OVERLOOK, THAT VERSATILITY IS THE COMPENSATION FOR CHANGE, DANGER, AND TROUBLE."</b> <b>Colin Stitt, INEQE</b></p> <p>Facilitated by INEQE, this workshop offers an interactive offline learning experience to understanding the online world. Through card-based activities, participants encounter real-life scenarios drawn from safeguarding incidents, case studies, and learning reviews. These scenarios highlight behaviours, risks, and the potential consequences of online interactions, focusing on critical themes like mental health, bullying, sextortion, and the sharing of personal information.</p>	<b>GALLERY</b> First Floor
<p><b>C</b> <b>"IT IS MY PLAN FOR A MACHINE TO TRAVEL THROUGH TIME."</b> <b>Karen McCormick, InCharge Ltd.</b></p> <p>Facilitated by InCharge Ltd this workshop will share the development journey of InCharge, a care app for people with a learning disability, autism and other support needs. It connects people, families and support teams. Attendees will explore their thoughts on how to further develop this technological solution and consider how technology can nurture trust and collaboration within support teams to improve lives.</p>	<b>LINSEED</b> Second Floor
<p><b>D</b> <b>"STRENGTH IS THE OUTCOME OF NEED."</b> <b>Tara Reddin &amp; Rute Goncalves, The Cedar Foundation</b> <b>Clive Evans, Aspirico</b></p> <p>Facilitated by the Cedar Foundation and Aspirico, this workshop will show a care planning software solution designed to help providers go beyond measurement of outputs and simply creating digital care plans in both Living Options and Employability Community Inclusion Services. Demonstration will show how iPlanit uniquely manages the full life cycle of services from referral, risk management to review from a person-centred standpoint.</p>	<b>*BEETLING</b> First Floor

## MORNING WORKSHOP

## ROOM

### **E "I REALLY AM A VISIBLE PERSON. AND I HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY."**

**Olivia Compston, BHSCT Speech & Language Team**  
**Meabh Bradley, Expert By Experience**  
**Mary Coyle, Expert By Experience (TILII)**  
**Louise Hughes, ARC NI**

Facilitated by the Belfast Trust and ARC NI, this interactive workshop will explore the power of assistive technology in improving communication. We will showcase practical tools and techniques that foster better understanding and expression. The workshop will also feature Meabh, who will share her journey using a high-tech Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) device, providing a firsthand look at how these tools have transformed her communication.

**RIVER**  
Ground Floor

## AFTERNOON WORKSHOP

### **F "UNDER THE NEW CONDITIONS OF PERFECT COMFORT AND SECURITY, THAT RESTLESS ENERGY, THAT WITH US IS STRENGTH, WOULD BECOME."**

**Laura Joss, Soul Harmony Energy & Sound**

Come join SOUL HARMONY ENERGY & SOUND and take part in a relaxing, meditation journey bathed in musical soundwaves and vibrations using singing bowls, voice and drums.

### **"THE WHOLE SURFACE OF THE EARTH SEEMED CHANGED – MELTING AND FLOWING UNDER MY EYES."**

**Jena Henning, Bolster Community**  
**Maeve Rob & Lisa McNulty, Expert By Experience**

Come join BOLSTER BUDDIES, learn about candle making and enjoy relaxing into making your own candle or wax melt.

**GALLERY**  
First Floor

### **G "WHILE THEY ONCE LIKELY ATE ANIMALS THAT THEY FOUND UNDERGROUND, THIS FOOD SUPPLY RAN OUT."**

**Jodie Wilson & Fionnuala Hughes, Autism Initiatives**  
**David Hamill, Expert By Experience**

Come join AUTISM INITIATIVES and learn more about healthy eating habits, using creative activities with a variety of sensory materials including dough, clay, felt, stickers, paints and pens.

### **"MUSIC - THE CLOSEST THING WE HAVE TO A TIME MACHINE."**

**DJ TWISTER, Expert By Experience Mark Patty**  
**DJ REVOLVE, Expert By Experience Robert Whiteman**  
**DJ Stevie B, Expert By Experience Steven Bradley**  
**Deidre McKenna, Outreach and Project Officer, Black Box**

Come join BRING THE NOISE BLACKMOON and learn how to use technology to support creativity and to self-organise, event planning, club night tech and work together to make things happen.

**RIVER**  
Ground Floor

**"The fact is, the Time Traveller was one of those men who are too clever to be believed."**

# EASY READ WORKSHOP

**\*PLEASE NOTE** that a lift is available to all floors – however there are a number of steps down to the BEETLING Room. This room is not accessible to wheelchair users.

## MORNING WORKSHOP DETAILS

## PLACE



**A** **How technology helps us find information about transitions** **Ballroom Ground Floor**

**Tracey Francis (ARC Scotland)**

- ARC Scotland will explain a tool to help people with a learning disability. autism and other support needs have access to information.
- This helps the Scottish Government know more about people's experiences.



**B** **Staying safe online** **Gallery 1st Floor**

**Colin Stitt (INEQE)**

- INEQUE will explain a tool that helps people supported learn about the online world.
- It talks about important things like bullying and sharing personal info.



**C** **Care app to stay connected** **Linseed 2nd Floor**

**Karen McCormick (InCharge Ltd.)**

- InCharge will explain a tool that helps connect people, families, and support teams.
- You will be asked your views on how this app can be made better.

## MORNING WORKSHOP DETAILS

## PLACE



### **D Computer program that helps organisations meet peoples needs**

**\*Beetling  
1st Floor**

**Tara Reddin & Rute Goncalves (The Cedar Foundation) Clive Evans (Aspirico)**

Cedar Foundation & Aspirico will explain a tool that helps:

- Organisations plan better services.
- Make better care plans for people with a learning disability, autism and other support needs.



**12:00pm Morning workshops end**

Go back to ballroom

## AFTERNOON WORKSHOP DETAILS

## PLACE



### **F Sound and chill!**

**Gallery  
First Floor**

**Laura Joss  
(Soul Harmony Energy & Sound)**

Join SOUL HARMONY ENERGY and SOUND for a calming time. Enjoy music with singing bowls, voice, and drums. Relax and feel good.



### **Glow and Create!**

**Jena Henning (Bolster Community)  
Maeve Rob & Lisa McNulty  
(Expert By Experience)**

Join BOLSTER BUDDIES to learn about candle making. Make your own candle or wax melt. It's a relaxing and fun activity.

**G Food fun!**

**Jodie Wilson & Fionnuala Hughes  
(Autism Initiatives) David Hamill  
(Expert By Experience)**

Join AUTISM INITIATIVES to learn about healthy eating. Be creative with things like dough, clay, felt, stickers, paints, and pens.

**River  
Ground  
Floor**

**Tech tunes and plan a party!**

**DJ TWISTER – Mark Patty  
(Expert By Experience)**

**DJ REVOLVE – Robert Whiteman  
(Expert By Experience)**

**DJ STEVIE B – Steven Bradley  
(Expert By Experience)**

**Deirdre Mckenna  
(Outreach and Project Officer, Black Box)**

Join BRING THE NOISE BLACKMOON to learn how to use technology for creativity. You will learn how to:

- plan events
- sort out club nights
- work together to make things happen.

# PANEL SLIDES

## DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

Laura McDonald, Deputy Director, Strategic Funding Division



### Our Commitment to the Equality and Inclusion of People With a Learning Disability, Autism and other Support Needs

#### The Services We Provide

**Funding**  
PEACE PLUS > €1bn  
Future Funding

**Dormant Assets**  
Extra funding for the VCSE  
Sector

**JAM Card**  
17,000 staff trained

#### As an Employer

**Diversity Action Plan**  
Ambitious plan covering  
how we recruit and retain

**Neurodiversity Toolkit**  
How we support our  
neurodiverse workforce

**Count Me In**  
We're working to improve the diversity data we hold on our  
current workforce so we can assess under-representation

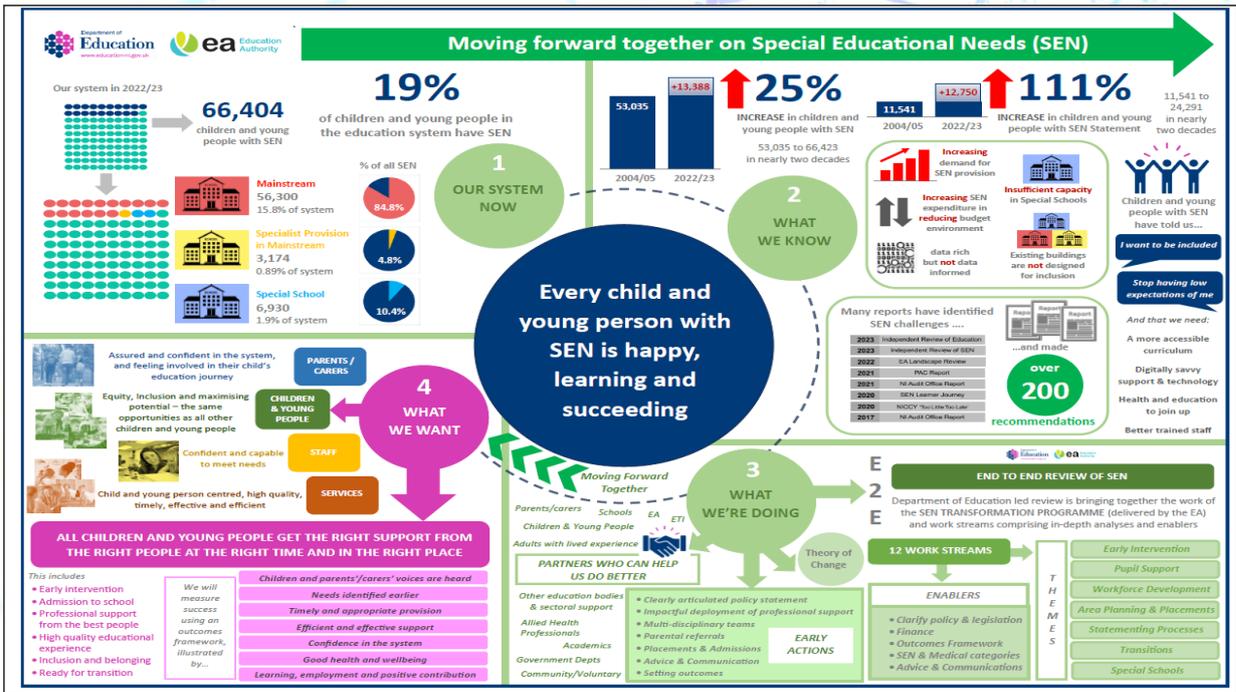
#### The Data We Collect

**NI Longitudinal Study**  
A primary source for  
diversity data in NI  
including Learning  
Disability, autism and other  
support needs.

“So I travelled, stopping ever and again, in great strides of a thousand years or more, watching with a strange fascination the life of the old earth ebb away.”

# DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Janis Scallan, Director for Inclusion



Truly Equal, Valuably Different

## SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS REFORM AGENDA

Delivering on the Executive's priority:  
**Better Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs**

February 2025

Truly Equal, Valuably Different

## SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS REFORM AGENDA – DELIVERY PLAN 2025-2030

Delivering on the Executive's (draft) priority:  
**"Better Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs"**

February 2025

# DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (CONTINUED)

Janis Scallon, Director for Inclusion

## What does Success Look Like?

	<b>Children and Young People</b>	Our Children with SEN enjoy the benefits of inclusion and have the same opportunities as their peers without SEN
	<b>Parents and Carers</b>	Parents and Carers are assured and confident in the SEN Processes & Delivery Approach
	<b>Staff and Schools</b>	Staff and Schools are confident in and capable of meeting needs
	<b>Services</b>	Child and young person centred, high quality, timely, effective and efficient

Our vision is that “children and young people with SEN get the right support, from the right people, at the right time and in the right place”, thus enabling them to be happy, learning and succeeding (in line with the department’s corporate vision for EVERY Child).

## Success, in practice will look like:

	<b>Right Support</b>	High quality, efficient and effective support that is evidence-based
	<b>Right People</b>	Having confident and highly skilled teaching and support staff who can access additional support to complement and enhance their practice
	<b>Right Time</b>	Effective early identification of needs and early intervention to meet those needs
	<b>Right Place</b>	Appropriate and timely placements that effectively meet the needs of every child and provide an appropriate learning environment

## EARLY and PRIORITY YEAR ONE ACTIONS

Delivery on this Reform Agenda will require sustained funding; however, change cannot wait. Some actions are already underway or due to begin imminently, others are subject to the outcome of a bid to the Northern Ireland Civil Service Transformation Fund – these are outlined in the table, below.

Early Actions	
Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Task and finish group to examine nomenclature around SEN</li> <li>• Digitisation of the statutory assessment and review process</li> <li>• Streamlining of statutory assessment and review process to meet statutory timeframes which will facilitate ensuring timely confirmation of school placements</li> <li>• Strategic Area Planning for special education provision across the continuum of provision, based on projected need, ensuring full pathways across all key stages and a SEN-first approach to operational plans (OP) – OP2 2024-26 has been published with a SEN-First approach</li> <li>• Resource pre-school education settings to support children undergoing statutory assessment</li> <li>• Publication and implementation of a child-centred Graduated Response Framework</li> <li>• Implementation of child-centred Local IMPACT Teams</li> <li>• Review of quality and appropriateness of specialist provision in mainstream schools including evaluation of Specialist Provision Early Years Foundation classes</li> </ul>
Subject to funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transform the support model for children with a statement of SEN</li> <li>• Establish and deliver a pilot early childhood intervention programme</li> <li>• Trial and implementation of a Speech, Language &amp; Communication Programme including the introduction of Toolkits (with IT &amp; AI interventions)</li> <li>• Trial and implementation of an Inclusive Play Programme approach to provide wrap-around services including enhanced therapeutic services</li> <li>• Trial and implementation of a ‘Nurture Plus’ approach to provide wrap-around services including enhanced therapeutic services</li> <li>• Design and trial a ‘Resource Hub’ model which harnesses the expertise within Special Schools and develops their role to support inclusion across the wider school system</li> <li>• Research, design and trial of Inclusion methodologies to promote equitable inclusive learning experiences</li> </ul>

## DEPARTMENT FOR THE ECONOMY

Graeme Wilkinson, Director of Skills in the Department for the Economy

### Improving Equality and Inclusion



Department for the  
**Economy**

An Roinn  
**Geilleagair**

[www.economy-ni.gov.uk](http://www.economy-ni.gov.uk)

#### Financial Support:

##### Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)

A supplementary allowance available to students who incur extra expenses from attending a higher education course, as a direct result of a disability, a mental health condition, or specific learning difficulty.

##### Additional Support Fund (ASF)

FE colleges provided £4.5m annually to support students with learning difficulties and disabilities to access further education

#### Careers Support:

**Impartial** and personalised advice and guidance on an **all-age, all-ability** basis

Professionally qualified careers advisers. Through partnership working with post-primary schools, including **special schools**, the Department's careers services are prioritised for pupils with barriers and those who are considered vulnerable and most in need.

#### Programmes:

##### Skills for Life & Work (SfLW)

Stepping stone for participants leaving school with **low or no qualifications** to access further mainstream training and employment.

Participants with a **disability** can access the programme **up to age 22** and receive an additional year on the programme

##### Step Up (Disability Access Route to Education and Employment (DARE) - Delivered by FE sector

Support measures for those who require **additional support** because of disability, to enhance the skills and employability opportunities.

##### Peace Plus Youth Programme [Six projects]

**7,500** young people who are not in education, employment, or training and who as a rule, do not readily engage or sustain engagement in other programmes.

**Mencap NI** is leading **HEROES+** project - bespoke, learning programmes to young people with a diverse range of abilities.

#### Post School – Special Educational Needs (SEN):

- **Review of current skills and training provision and legislative protections** for young people with SEN – due to report to Minister in the Spring
- **Working with DE on their Delivery Plan** commitment to improve transition for young people with SEN

#### Widening Participation:

**Ministerial Priority** - all those who have the ability to benefit from **higher education** have the **opportunity** to do so.

**Target support groups** include areas of high deprivation, those with a **disability (physical, sensory or learning)**, adult returners, and those who have experience of the care system.

Creating a globally competitive economy that works for everyone

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Mark McGuicken, Director of Disability and Older People

### Department of Health



Department of  
**Health**

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

[www.health-ni.gov.uk](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk)

#### Health & Social Care

- £500 million per annum to support 9,000 adults
- We support lots of people well, but there is room to improve....
- Interfaces across government
- Learning Disability Service Model
  - Evidence base
  - Our approach
  - Next Steps

## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

David Lennox, Head of Corporate Communications and Engagement Division

### Key Points



- Participation in JAM Card scheme
- Autism: a guide for criminal justice professionals
- Registered Intermediaries Scheme
- NI Appropriate Adult Scheme
- Examples of actions taken within the Northern Ireland Prison Service and Youth Justice Agency.

## DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES

Deirdre Ward, Director for Work and Wellbeing

ARC NI – Conference



### Improving Equality and Inclusion

Key areas from Department for Communities (with a focus on Work and Wellbeing)

- **Executive Social Inclusion Strategies:**  
Leading development of a new Executive Disability Strategy for Northern Ireland, with a primary aim of improving the lives of people living here who are deaf or disabled, so that they can play a full and active role in all aspects of society.
- **Delivery of Employability Provision:**  
Offering a range of provision to support disabled people and those with health conditions to move closer, enter, and progress in employment – across programmes, frontline services, commissioning research, and delivering training and support.
- **A new Disability and Work Strategy for NI:**  
Co-producing a new strategy with a wide range of partners to set a 10-year target for increasing our disability employment rate – focusing on 'Personalised Support'; 'Inclusive Skills, Careers and Educational Transitions'; 'Supporting and Enabling Employers'; and 'Strategic and Structural Enablers'.
- **Collaborating to 'Join the Dots':**  
Working with many partners to join-up agendas, break down silos, and take a holistic approach to improving the support to individuals with barriers to work - driving change that will see greater equality and inclusion across the labour market.

# CONTRIBUTORS' BIOGRAPHIES

## CHAIRS

### NAME

### DETAILS

**Leslie-Anne Newton**  
ARC NI

Leslie-Anne is a leader with extensive experience across the UK in both the Third and Public sectors. Since 2014, she has led ARC Northern Ireland. Leslie-Anne is known for her skill in strategic leadership, successfully managing the inclusion of different people working together in meetings, conference and events, and sector-specific training initiatives. She has a proven track record in brokering different views, influencing policy, and facilitating impactful research collaborations with leading universities.

Her career reflects a deep commitment to human rights, equality and inclusion and safeguarding, with previous roles at Save the Children, Warwickshire County Council, and NSPCC. Leslie-Anne is married with two children, and a dog. Even though she is a workaholic, Leslie-Anne loves taking time out with her family on sunny holidays.

**Catherine Orr**  
Telling It Like It Is

Catherine is a proud member of the TILII group and works to make a difference by speaking up for herself and others. She loves living on her family farm and being involved in local community groups.

Catherine is passionate about making sure everyone's voice is heard.

“At first things were very confusing. Everything was so entirely different from the world I had known – even the flowers.”

# SPEAKERS

## NAME

## DETAILS

**Camilla Kvalheim**  
TV BRA

Camilla is the CEO and Editor-in-Chief of TV BRA. She has been the driving force behind the establishment of a dedicated TV channel by and for people with intellectual disabilities in Norway.

In just a few years, she has transformed this groundbreaking TV project into a nationwide news channel, with reporters representing different regions across the country. Major TV and radio broadcasters from several countries have reached out to TV BRA, showing great interest in what has been created.

**Geraldine McGahey OBE**  
Equality Commission  
Northern Ireland

Geraldine was appointed the Chief Commissioner for the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in March 2020, having served as a Commissioner from 2015. Prior to this Geraldine was a former Chief Executive of Larne Borough Council and SOLACE gender champion. She represented local government on various regional fora including the Good Relations Panel, Flags Forum, Social Investment Fund and the Review of Public Administration.

Geraldine has served as a Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Parades commission from 2016 through to 2020 and as a Non-Executive Director of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust from 2016 to 2020.

Geraldine is a graduate of the University of Ulster and the University College of Estate Management. Geraldine was awarded the OBE in 2015 for services to local Government and the Community.

# CONFERENCE 25 THEATRE COMPANY - ACTORS

## NAME

## DETAILS

**Jennifer, Kilcreggan**

Jennifer is a 47-year-old lady who lives at home with her mum, dad and 2 children. Jennifer loves being a mum and spending time with her children is her favourite thing to do.

Jennifer attends Carrick Base and NRC where she is enrolled on a life skills course. Jennifer enjoys spending time with her friends and Family. Jennifer's favourite food is a Chinese takeaway at the weekends.

**Kerry, Kilcreggan**

Kerry is a young lady who lives independently in her own apartment. She has a passion for animals and has a Guinea Pig who lives with her.

Kerry works in an action cancer charity shop and enjoys the interaction with her local community. Kerry attends Carrick base and the Gateway club. Kerry enjoys spending time with her family in her spare time.

## NAME

## DETAILS

### Natalia, CAN

Natalia loves to travel and has been far and wide from Route 66, cruises to European cities and Wales.

### Shane, CAN

Shane loves his wrestling and has his own title belt. He got this in Florida. Liverpool is his football team, and Shane has been to Anfield. Lego is also a passion of Shane's.

## GOVERNMENT PANEL

## NAME

## DETAILS

### David Lennox Department of Justice

David is Head of Corporate Communications and Engagement Division within the Department of Justice. He is responsible for a range of corporate governance functions including corporate and business planning for the Department, risk management, oversight of the Department's equality obligations and is the Department's Racial Equality Champion.

David is also responsible for providing support to the Minister of Justice including the Department's press function and has oversight of four statutory schemes that provide compensation for victims of criminal injury or criminal damage in Northern Ireland as well as delivery of the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme.

### David Porter Department for Infrastructure

David is currently the Director of Engineering with the Department for infrastructure (DfI), which is the roads authority for Northern Ireland. In this position, David is the Chief Highways Engineer and the Head of the Civil Engineering Profession within the Northern Ireland Civil Service. He is responsible for the professional development of staff, engineering policy and standards, health and safety, and leads the internal consultancy and the procurement team. Previously, David was the Chief Executive of Rivers Agency, the flood defence and drainage authority for Northern Ireland.

David is Senior Vice President of the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), and will be President in November 2025. David is a Chartered Civil Engineer, a Fellow of the Irish Academy of Engineering, and a Fellow of ICE.

## NAME

## DETAILS

**Deirdre Ward**  
Department for  
Communities

Deirdre was appointed the Director of Work and Wellbeing in September 2018 with responsibility for Employability and Disability and Work policy and delivery of labour market interventions.

Before this she was Deputy Director of Housing with responsibility for the Supporting People budget, Fuel Poverty and Homelessness. Deirdre was Business Development Director of Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland® since March 2007. In this position she was responsible for the strategic direction for all sales, marketing and product activity.

Deirdre has worked for Invest NI and was located in America selling Northern Ireland to American Companies so that they would relocate here and benefit our economy.

Originally from a scientific background, Deirdre has since completed a Masters in Business Administration and numerous development courses involving selling, project management, process mapping and benchmarking and a Diploma in Personnel Management.

**Graeme Wilkinson**  
Department for the  
Economy

Graeme is the Director of Skills in the Department for the Economy. He has policy responsibility for Skills, migration, and the delivery of a suite of short terms skills interventions. This includes Assured Skills Academies, Skill UP and Step UP.

Prior to taking up this post, Graeme led the EU exit preparations as Director of EU Relations in TEO and as Brexit Director in DAERA.

Graeme is a Chartered Accountant and has spent the majority of his career in the Public sector.

**Janis Scallon**  
Department of Education

Janis is the Department of Education (DE) Director for Inclusion (since October 2023). Prior to that she was DE director of Sustainable Schools Policy and Planning for 5 years. Her professional background is in Statistics and Research and she had a 25 year career in this field, working across many government departments, the private sector and public sector.

Janis is privileged to be the mum of two children, one neurotypical and one autistic. Having this lens has given her an insight on the importance of inclusion and a clear passion for her current role to ensure that EVERY child with Special Educational Needs is happy, learning and succeeding with the right support from the right people at the right time and in the right place.

## NAME

## DETAILS

**Mark McGuicken**  
Department of Health

Mark was appointed the Director of Disability and Older People for the Department of Health in September 2021.

Mark has been a Civil Servant for more than 34 years working primarily in the Northern Ireland Office and the Department of Justice and has overall policy responsibility for Special Education Needs, Learning Disability, Physical and Sensory Disability, Autism, Adult Safeguarding Legislation, Gender Identity, Care Homes, Home Care, Carers, Dementia, Muckamore Abbey Hospital, and the Reform of Adult Social Care. He is also leading the response to specific Modules of the COVID Inquiry.

He is married with three children and an avid rugby spectator.

**Laura McDonald**  
Department of Finance

Laura is Deputy Director of Strategic Funding in the Department of Finance. Laura is responsible for engagement and negotiation around EU replacement and directly delivered UK Government funding. She also works on North/South engagement and manages work around the Windsor Framework in the Department.

Laura leads on the cross-departmental funding policy working group which has representation from all departments. The work on the Shared Prosperity Fund and its successors is taken through this group ensuring a collaborative and consistent approach to replacement and successor funding.

**PANEL CHAIRED BY:**  
**Linda McAuley**

Linda is an accomplished and award-winning radio presenter with nearly 48 years' experience in broadcasting. For the past 30 years she has specialised in consumer advocacy and journalism. She has recently retired from award winning programme BBC Radio Ulster's 'On Your Behalf', and is now branching out into the world of non executive boards, events host and charity work.

Both Linda and her radio programme have been recognised for outstanding contributions to radio and consumer rights, creating an inclusive platform for all listeners, especially those with disabilities or communication challenges. Awards include Trading Standards Institute National Media Hero Award and an MBE for Services to Consumers.

# DELEGATES' LIST

## NAME

## ORGANISATION

## NAME

## ORGANISATION

Lorraine Black	Access Employment Ltd (AEL)	Linda McFarland	Caring Breaks
Emma Hassan	Apex Housing Association	Kelly Devlin	Cedar Foundation (The)
Mary Coyle	ARC NI	Rute Goncalves	Cedar Foundation (The)
Louise Hughes	ARC NI	Tara Reddin	Cedar Foundation (The)
John Mullan	ARC NI	Deena Nimick	Centre For Independent Living NI
Leslie-Anne Newton	ARC NI	Melody Craig	Compass Advocacy Network (CAN)
Catherine Orr	ARC NI	Megan Fleming	Compass Advocacy Network (CAN)
Ciana Roberts	ARC NI	Tom Mallon	Compass Advocacy Network (CAN)
Charlotte Smith	ARC NI	Shane McCandless	Compass Advocacy Network (CAN)
Joseph Turnbull	ARC NI	Natalia McClelland	Compass Advocacy Network (CAN)
Stephen Walker	ARC NI	Caolan McIlvar	Compass Advocacy Network (CAN)
Tracey Francis	ARC Scotland	Tristan McWilliams	Compass Advocacy Network (CAN)
David Sargent	ARC UK	Andrea Morrow	Compass Advocacy Network (CAN)
Susie Vint	Ashton Community Trust	Janet Schofield	Compass Advocacy Network (CAN)
Clive Evans	Aspiricio	Yullia Zolotukhina	Compass Advocacy Network (CAN)
David Hamill	Autism Initiatives	Maryann Maccroy	Connected Health
Fioannuala Hughes	Autism Initiatives	Anita Todd	Connected Health
Adele Leighton	Autism Initiatives	Paul Loughlin	Dept for Communities
Jodie Wilson	Autism Initiatives	Cachal McCann	Dept for Communities
Ema Cubitt	Autism Reviewer	Deirdre Ward	Dept for Communities
Meabh Bradley	Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	Janis Scallan	Dept for Education
Vincent Bradley	Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	Graeme Wilkinson	Dept for the Economy
Olivia Compston	Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	Laura McDonald	Dept of Finance
Jena Henning	Bolster Community	Nigel Chambers	Dept of Health
Lisa McNulty	Bolster Community	Mark McGuicken	Dept of Health
Maeve Robb	Bolster Community	Robyn Lennox	Dept of Health (SPPG)
Allison Slater	Bolster Community	Caroline McGonigle	Dept of Health (SPPG)
Chris Griffin	Brown & Brown	Randal McHugh	Dept of Health (SPPG)
Gemma Hamilton	Camphill Communities Trust NI	David Petticrew	Dept of Health (SPPG)
Colin Harper	Camphill Communities Trust NI	Helga Sneddon	Dept of Health (SPPG)
Paul Betts	Camphill Glenraig	David Porter	Dept of Infrastructure
Karen Aiken	Camphill Mourne Grange	David Lennox	Dept of Justice
Lizzie Dixon	Camphill Mourne Grange	Natasha McClelland	Equality Commission NI
Bente Jensen	Camphill Mourne Grange	Geraldine McGahey	Equality Commission NI
Ned Lyons	Camphill Mourne Grange	Paul Noonan	Equality Commission NI
Thomas Neagles	Camphill Mourne Grange	Ruth Graham	Graphic Facilitator
Christina Weir	Camphill Mourne Grange	Araceli Flores	Healthcare Ireland Ltd
Dolores Finnerty	Caring Breaks	Lorna King	Healthcare Ireland Ltd

## NAME

## ORGANISATION

## NAME

## ORGANISATION

Diana Mos	Healthcare Ireland Ltd	Agnes Lunny	Positive Futures
Ben Raynot	Healthcare Ireland Ltd	Anne Magee	Positive Futures
Paul Williams	Healthcare Ireland Ltd	Julie McDowell	Positive Futures
Karen McCormick	InCharge Ltd	Orla McElhone	Positive Futures
Kelly Brown	IncredABLE	Cara McNamee	Positive Futures
Gary Crozier	IncredABLE	Annie Patrick	Positive Futures
Nigel Hampton	IncredABLE	Barbara Perrin	Positive Futures
Ryan Johnston	IncredABLE	Paul Roberts	Positive Futures
Patrick Kerr	IncredABLE	Chloe Smyth	Positive Futures
Jody Patience	IncredABLE	Sophie Spence	Positive Futures
Colin Stitt	INEQE Safeguarding Group	Tracey O'Donnell	Prader-Willi Syndrome Association UK
Mark Breslin	Informing Choices NI	Greer Wilson	Praxis Care
Deborah McGinn	Informing Choices NI	Ciaran Connelly	Profile Tree
Michelle Agnew	Inspire Wellbeing	Sarah Leitch	Restraint Reduction Network
Yvonne Cassidy	Inspire Wellbeing	Alexis Quinn	Restraint Reduction Network
Claire Berry	Kilcreggan Homes	Martin Walls	Sense NI
Pauline Brady	Kilcreggan Homes	Nadine Bond	Shaftesbury
Jennifer Cole	Kilcreggan Homes	Paul Johnston	Shaftesbury
Magda Ostrowska	Kilcreggan Homes	Debora Turkington	Shaftesbury
Kerry Wilson	Kilcreggan Homes	Laura Joss	Soul Harmony Energy & Sound
Linda McAuley	Linda McAuley	Kelly Baxter	Stepping Stones NI
Karen Gilgunn	Mencap NI	Natalie Cairns	Stepping Stones NI
Barry McMenamin	Mencap NI	Pauline Cunningham	Stepping Stones NI
Michaela Mackin	NIPSO	Catherine Valley	Stepping Stones NI
Nicholas Young	NIPSO	Naomi Wylie	Stepping Stones NI
Karen Coulter	Northern Health & Social Care Trust	Steven Bradley	The Black Box Trust
Seamus Coyle	Northern Health & Social Care Trust	Deirdre Mckenna	The Black Box Trust
Gareth Farmer	Northern Health & Social Care Trust	Mark Patty	The Black Box Trust
Bernie Crossan	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	Robert Whiteman	The Black Box Trust
Alister Mawhinney	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	William Busby	Triangle Housing
Laura O'Neill	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	Andrea Duncan	Triangle Housing
Lindsay Blaney	Positive Futures	Denise Magill	Triangle Housing
Deborah Gowdy	Positive Futures	Emily Robinson	Triangle Housing
Joanne Grimes	Positive Futures	Colette Sheppard	Triangle Housing
Ellie Harbinson	Positive Futures	Frank Stewart	Triangle Housing
Elizabeth Hollinger	Positive Futures	Camilla Kvaheim	TV BRA
Donna Johnston	Positive Futures		
Nicola Johnston	Positive Futures		



Association for Real Change (Northern Ireland)  
McSweeney Centre,  
31 Henry Place,  
Belfast BT15 2AY

**Tel:** (028) 9038 0960

**Email:** [arc.ni@arcuk.org.uk](mailto:arc.ni@arcuk.org.uk)

[arcni.org.uk](http://arcni.org.uk)

 [www.facebook.com/arcnorthernireland/](https://www.facebook.com/arcnorthernireland/)  
 [@arcni](https://twitter.com/arcni)