

# Belfast South Community Resource Centre

## THE JOURNEY AND THE WORK



*A report to share an understanding of the context of the past, current and future work of Belfast*



## **Introduction**

### **Belfast South Community Resource - Local People Addressing Local Needs**

Belfast South Community Resource [BSCR] is a voluntary community development body, established in 2005 with a primary purpose *“to enable people, particularly the community in Sandy Row, to develop their potential through participation in community business, arts, culture, sports, educational and environmental activities”*

BSCR is a development of Sandy Row Residents group which itself grew from an attempt to address the growing tensions in the area arising from the 1996 ‘Drumcree crisis’. In response local people, including many with no previous involvement in community work, decided that the best way for them to help alleviate the growing tensions and avoid any repetition of the trouble was to build cultural and festive activity around the traditional ‘Twelfth’ celebration. A festival was planned which would enable local people to celebrate the positive aspects of Protestant culture and identity, and give them the opportunity to direct their energy towards positive activity. This eight-day festival was a tremendous success, with a high level of participation, and a significant reduction in tension felt within the community.

Building on the success of the festival and the interest and involvement of many local residents, the group began looking at other issues identified by the local community. These issues included unemployment and educational issues and it was in response to the community’s need to tackle these wider problems that BSCR was established.

Since its inception BSCR has built its reputation and achievements contributing to the development, regeneration and enhancement of the quality of life for residents of South West Belfast, and providing a more streamlined cost effective service delivery in response to the needs of Neighbourhood Renewal. It does so, always mindful of its’ primary purpose, placing people, community and their needs at the heart of its work.

And needs there have been and needs there still are.....

### **Sandy Row—History at its heart**

Ask anyone from Belfast to describe Sandy Row and they may well refer to a staunchly loyalist community located just off the Donegall Road in South Belfast. Indeed, worldwide Sandy Row is probably best known as a fiercely loyalist community with an image portrayed by the international media in the past, of burning cars and paramilitary murals.

Older people, throughout Northern Ireland, might refer to it as having been a great shopping area and a place where people travelled to find a bargain or as an area dominated by factories and workshops where people from many districts and traditions in Belfast and other parts of Northern Ireland came to find work.

Sandy Row is perhaps best described as a place with a history and a future that contributes to its status as a unique and iconic district in Belfast.

The boundary of Sandy Row is geographically defined from the Boyne Bridge to the Lisburn Road and from Shaftsbury Square to the Donegal Road Bridge.

It has a proud cultural identity with the commercial frontage and the satellite streets radiating from the 'Row', being



once a 'hub' of community and commercial life. Sandy Row had a historic significance as an area rich in industry and manufacturing and the community had the benefits of the railway, mills and the Whitehall tobacco factory providing employment for the local community and others from diverse areas in Belfast as well as a wide range of shops and businesses along Sandy Row itself including Reeds and Gilpins furniture shop.

From 1996-2000 the area experienced serious rioting linked to disputes surrounding the annual Drumcree Parade. In 1996 in Sandy Row alone over £300,000 worth of damage occurred. The hidden cost that has continued to be paid until more recently is a dramatic drop in trade for local retailers. Over the next few years, the Sandy Row area was further affected by loyalist feuds which caused intra community tension generating suspicion, mistrust and segregation among and between communities and leading to further isolation. Throughout the 'conflict' Sandy Row has experienced higher than average levels of violence and polarisation.

The negative image of areas such as Sandy Row has deterred visitors, inward investors and inhibited local entrepreneurs.

This area is situated in the Shaftsbury Electoral Ward which ranks 23<sup>rd</sup> in the NIMDM (2010) and is adjacent to the Balckstaff Electoral Ward which ranks 28<sup>th</sup> under some measures. This combined neighbourhood has been identified as within

the top 10% most deprived area in NI and as such designated the south west Belfast Neighbourhood Renewal Area.

Sandy Row has suffered socially, economically, environmentally and physically from the legacy of “The Conflict” which continues to permeate nearly all aspects of life in Sandy Row as sustained segregation and inequality underpins deep social divisions and poverty.

Aspects of the conflict including actual violence, community tensions and destruction of local infrastructure have resulted in low levels of entrepreneurship and out-migration of those with valuable skills and qualifications. Specific problems, which have been generated in the Sandy Row area as a result of the conflict, include low educational attainment and employability along with a lack of employment opportunities due to a lack of private sector investment over the years.

Historic and current needs are captured in the information in the table below

<b>Economic Profile</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shaftesbury ward has a population of 5,785</li> <li>• Falls within the 10% most deprived wards</li> <li>• Sandy Row estimated population 2,153</li> <li>• 1,857 (86%) of the neighbourhood are predominately Protestant and other Christian</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of all persons aged 16–74 930 (62%) have no qualifications</li> <li>• 65.5% of school leavers no 5 or more GCSE</li> <li>• Only 33% proceed into further education</li> <li>• 85.7% have no degree/higher qualification</li> </ul>
<b>Employment and Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 821(55%) are classed as economically inactive</li> <li>• Of the 677 (45%) that are economically active 14% (93) are unemployed</li> <li>• 47.8% are long term unemployed</li> <li>• 32.3% 18-59 year olds claiming income support</li> </ul>

Evidence from social, economic and demographic data and consultation with the community and its social partners identifies the key characteristics of need in the area.

- A population suffering from economic and social deprivation
- An area suffering from significant levels of underachievement, where many young people are unemployed and disengaged
- A lower than average economic activity rate. Of those who are economically active, a higher than average number are long-term unemployed
- Economic inactivity prevalent in the area because of sickness, disability and family commitments. This is reflected in the high levels of single female and lone parents claiming income support allowance.

- In the 60s and just before the onset of the conflict Sandy Row was a bustling, thriving community of some 15,000 people. The legacy from that conflict resulted in a community, fiercely loyalist in its political and cultural identity, living behind invisible interface walls, tightly knit but also very isolated.
- The isolation was heightened when, through the influx of private developers, the Sandy Row area was transformed from community of 15000 to one of around 2500 surrounded by large apartment blocks and an increasingly derelict “front of the Row” as absentee landlords and the legacy of “the troubles” created a derelict physical environment and poverty of hope that impacted adversely on residents, traders and visitors alike.

Sandy Row was and remains a vital part of the fabric of Belfast city. It is an area in the process of change and transition with high levels of disadvantage and deprivation in the area that need to be addressed to assist the regeneration in the neighbourhood. The work of rebuilding the social fabric and assisting regeneration has to involve the active participation of those people who live in the area. BSCR, paid and voluntary staff are committed to a belief and practice that recognises that in order for confidence and then skills to be gained, individuals must be given a stake in the regeneration of their own area.

While having a clear focus as a community based organisation, BSCR is also committed to working with other social partners including public and statutory bodies, funders and local groups such as Sandy Row Community Forum, the South West Belfast Neighbourhood Renewal Programme members, GVRT, South City and the South Belfast Partnership Board. It does so for the greater good of all the people living in South Belfast and across the City as a whole.

BSCR, the community and its public and other social partners continue to maintain a hope and expectation that regeneration and revitalization will be realized in harmony with the other positive opportunities happening in the area.

However, BSCR recognizes that regeneration and revitalization is more than the improvement of physical, economic and social aspects of the area and environment. It requires a commitment and drive to enable the community as a whole to participate and inform decision making in the issues that most affect their lives and the future of the area as a whole.

People always have been and remain the heart of the Sandy Row, whether to live, learn, socialize, work or visit.

BSCR is a hub where people can come to hear and contribute to that heartbeat.

BSCR services and projects are simply opportunities to make the heartbeat stronger.

## **BSCR; What We Do and How We Do It**

The BSCR **vision** is simple; BSCR, *A hub of community activity in Sandy Row, where people come to be the best they can be.*

It seeks in its **mission** *To create a hub of community activity in Sandy Row, where individuals and groups of people can fulfill their potential by providing access to quality services and support'.*

A series of **primary goals** drive the work of BSCR based on the need identified previously

- Tackle educational underachievement, barriers to employment and skills deficit
- Address systemic issues in the area that heighten deprivation, community fears and lack of confidence in the area
- Tackle economic and physical decline and general dereliction in the area.
- Reduce isolation of individuals and the area
- Ensure quality governance and ethical practice underpins our work.

The sub sections that follow provide a brief overview of our activities but more importantly the achievements of individuals, groups and a community undergoing positive change and transition along with our hopes for our shared futures.

### **Tackle educational underachievement, barriers to employment and skills deficit**

Belfast South Community Resources have identified a number of different factors which have a negative influence on the ability of Sandy Row residents to improve upon their quality of life and on their levels of employability. These include low levels of literacy and educational attainment, low levels of self-confidence, feelings of social isolation and lack of relevant employment related skills.

The group has sought to tackle these problems in a number of ways:

BSCR set-up the Sandy Row IT Centre as a means of delivering high quality IT training to the local community. The centre is based in a purpose built computer suite within BSCR's offices. The IT courses offered by the centre vary in skill level and content and allow trainees to embark on a progressive



path of IT learning. For absolute beginners there are the lower level CLAIT and OCR courses which lead on to the more intermediate level CLAIT + and ECDL. We also offer OCR Diploma, Intermediate & Advanced Levels. At the highest level are the IT centre in Sandy Row is at present the only community based centre in South Belfast to be approved to deliver some of its higher level course including the MOS exams, which lead on to a Microsoft Masters certificate, the leading advanced qualification in this sector of the industry.

Increasingly we find that a lot of our students, because of the recession, are seeking fast track qualifications through having their previous experience and expertise assessed and accredited. The Sandy Row IT Centre is one of the only centres in Belfast which will allow them to come in, assess their skills and if they are able allow them to complete an exam within a few days. One consequence of this is that the profile of our client intake is changing with a third now coming from the nationalist tradition and others from minority ethnic communities.

Entry or re-entry into employment remains a challenge for many people. Belfast South Community Resources alongside GEMS and various other community groups in South Belfast participated in a jobs fair at Charter Youth Club. BSCR had their own stall to guide and advise as many people as possible with training and employment. Lots of people came in to see what was on offer, including the opportunity to try brick-laying, wall climbing and beauty treatments.

At present BSCR run two social enterprise projects, a community transport scheme, and the management of the car park on the Linfield Road. Promoting sustainability is essential for the Centre and for the area as a whole. Looking to the future, BSCR is committed to establishing at least one other social enterprise in the area to contribute to social and economic sustainability including employment and training.

In the Sandy Row IT Centre we also offer customized training for those who wish to learn without feeling they need to sit exams for certification. Hence the presence of some of our “silver surfers” smiling for the camera below



**In the past year 140 people have registered for IT courses and 200 employer recognised exams have been passed.**

As a result of ongoing training needs assessment the Sandy Row IT Centre year is now delivering hardware training through the A+ course. We have established a specialist training room as well with the potential to increase employability opportunities for participants in the future. The A+ programme is unique in the South Belfast area. This course requires that students build, configure and network computers. The examination body is CompTia which is industry recognised as is the qualification.

Thanks to the funding supplied by Belfast City Council, BSCR have been able to provide training **programmes for potential or actual community leaders** from a range of areas across Belfast.



## **Working With Victims and Survivors of Crime**

We have been ground breaking in utilising our capacity building to offer the NVQ Level 3 in Working with Victims and Survivors of Crime to a number of individuals. The programme and the people gaining the vocational qualification have the potential to make a significant positive contribution to **engagement between individuals involved in local development, victims of crime and a range of justice organisations** seeking to work together to provide interventions for support prevention and protection to build safer and sustainable communities. We have used elements of the programme to enable other individuals to attend specific training modules such as the impact of crime on victims.

The **Train the Trainers programme** enables participants to acquire the practice skills and knowledge requirements to design and deliver training within their own work setting. It means that those who pass the course will be able to deliver certain community development programmes for and on behalf of their own organisations, rather than pay huge amounts of money to consultants. [Excellent saving and sustainability building!]

## **Celebrate our achievements with us BSCR Successes and Achievements!**

**As a result of our work in 2011/12....**

- **22 people are now employed**
- **19 people have passed First Aid**
- **8 people have their Door Security qualification**

- **132 people have passed OCR Levels 2&3**
- **The Young Enterprise Group won 'Best Environmental Product' and 'Best Newcomers' categories at the Young Enterprise Awards**
- **46 people now have an ECDL**
- **8 people have their Basic Food and Hygiene Level 2 Certificate**
- **11 people are progressing through their Childcare QCF Level 2**
- **25 people are now certified Microsoft Office Specialists**
- **8 people gained their NVQ Level 3 in Working with Victims and Witnesses of Crime**
- **12 people completed the ILM endorsed Training the Trainers Award**
- **8 people have passed and another 8 people are currently completing their Comptia A+ certification**

**Our main challenge for training** – Belfast South Community Resources seeks to locate the operational core of the project within the Sandy Row/Mid-Donagall Road area of South Belfast. In the longer term we see a need for a new purpose build centre which could become the core for a new integrated redevelopment plan for Sandy Row. In the short to medium term, the BSCR facilities are not fit for purpose in terms of accessibility and as a match for the quality of the training and other service provision. We urgently need new premises and are currently carrying out needs assessment for space and facilities matched to potential locations in the area.

**We need political will, support and a few shillings to make it happen. Can you help?**

**Address systemic issues in the area that heighten deprivation, community fears and lack of confidence in the area**

It's a sad fact of life in Sandy Row and indeed in other 'loyalist' areas, that some of our kids do not do as well in school as children from other areas. In 2011 no one passed the new Grammar School entrance exams in the local primary school. This is a shocking statistic but not so unusual for this area. Barriers faced by the community in Sandy Row have summarily been discussed in the 'Task Force Report' as, for example, long-term unemployment and second and third generation unemployment exists in this area and this cycle becomes difficult to address. Many young people have been attracted to paramilitary activities throughout the conflict and this became the only means through which they gained self-esteem and local respect. This along with a lack of peer role models who have been successful in education or employment and the lack of qualifications, even literacy and numeracy skills, served to act as severe barriers to training and employment opportunities in the past.

BSCR feel that Tackling Educational Underachievement and Promoting Employability as key ways in which we can help the community redress the imbalance of inequality and disadvantage that they experience and at the same time confront some of the systemic issues surrounding deprivation. As a result BSCR have successfully developed and implemented several key projects that are based within the Centre:

**REACH;** The REACH project has two aspects.

One is a **programme for un-employed adults and young people 18 years +**who have left school with little or no education. It offers a variety of courses and programmes that will hopefully be a building block to employment. Courses vary including SIA Door Security, CSR Card Training, Childcare Level 2 and Forklift Truck Training. We are now attracting participants who may not previously have completed training with BSCR.

Participants say about the benefits of the programme

- *Free access to training*
- *Fully supported throughout project*
- *Transport provided if need to travel*
- *Training doesn't affect or interrupt benefits*
- *Have lots of contacts to sign post to other groups if BSCR can't help.*
- *The service is local and the staff are friendly.*
- *There's lots of support and people are able to work at their own pace.*
- *It provides access to different types of training that wasn't available previously at a local level.*

The **REACH 16-18 yr old Project** targets young people leaving school with little or no qualifications working with them to achieve their Essential Skills in English, Maths & ICT and completing an Employability Project that will be the equivalent to 5 B's! The students received a weekly attendance allowance of £40 and attend Monday - Friday every week.

BSCR worked hard to secure the funding for this project. For us, it is a way to focus a response to the needs of young people who have already, at an early age, begun to disengage from education and training.

It is not easy work but it is vital. For many young people it is a glimpse of a hope and belief in them from others that they can and will succeed in a learning and employment environment when support is in place that addresses all aspects of their lives.

Within its first year the Reach Programme has achieved significant success, not only for the young people but for those who work with us.

### **Sandy Row Mentoring Success [Extract from Stranmillis University College Newsletter]**



*Stranmillis University College Business and Enterprise students Eryn Purdy, Gemma Smyth, Niamh McDaid and Joanne Bradley have been volunteering in the 'Reach' project in Sandy Row, mentoring a group of our young people. During the mentoring process Stranmillis students linked with Young Enterprise to help the young adults*

*develop a mini business. Proud of their culture the young people decided to promote the Sandy Row Community by producing calendars of historical murals and other landmarks in Sandy Row. The young adults, accompanied by the Stranmillis students, went to the Ballymena Trade Fair to raise money for the calendar venture. They had produced a variety of products including bookmarks, Christmas cards and Santa stockings. The trade fair was very successful and the Stranmillis students were incredibly proud that their 'mentees' achieved the accolade of 'Best Newcomer'.*

### **REACH Project Wins Again!**



Subsequently the young people from the REACH Project and students from Stranmillis College went along again to the Young Enterprise Trade Fair, where they sold most of their items and received a prize for the "Most Environmental Product".

The **partnership** developed between **Stranmillis University College**, BSCR and other social partners in the area has proved to be a great success. The aim of the project is to provide individual and small group academic instruction to primary



and post primary pupils from the Sandy Row and Village areas of South Belfast. Our shared goal is to engage, motivate and provide children with hands-on meaningful learning experiences that will maximise their potential and build confidence in literacy and maths in particular. The partnership project do not aim to subvert the role of the school but to help tackle educational underachievement in our area by reinforcing learning that occurs during the

regular school day. These classes are free to pupils from the Sandy Row and Village areas and therefore represent a great opportunity for all to enhance their educational achievements.

Talking about the project the BSCR manager said *“I have worked in Sandy Row for over 10 years and if this partnership between the college and ourselves works out the way we hope, it will undoubtedly be one of the most worthwhile programmes I have had the privilege to work on. It represents a fantastic opportunity for our children to attain their full potential”*.

## Looking ahead

Some of the ideas that are being progressed through the project include:

- ✓ Extra help for the homework club in the Community Centre
- ✓ A revamped post primary school work club in BSCR
- ✓ Extra resources for the primary school to run special preparation classes for the transfer test.
- ✓ Special revision classes in Stranmillis College
- ✓ Children from Sandy Row travelling to Stranmillis College for the day to get a feel for the college, science labs etc.

## Addressing fears and promoting confidence in the area

BSCR have been working hard to try and bring back confidence in the local community through the work of their Community Confidence project. BSCR Community Confidence and Safety services work in collaboration with community members themselves and with other agencies such as PSNI, NIHE, BCC, FASA and YJA on behalf of the community to tackle issues which involve crime, disorder and anti social behaviour.

The Community Confidence Project Officer seeks, with others working in peacebuilding and safety issues in the area, to improve and maintains the feeling of safety and security in local neighbourhood and the wider South Belfast Partnership area.

Social partners and community members have identified the benefits of the work to date.

- *Provides the community with an opportunity to have greater say and prioritise local concerns.*
- *Helps deliver local solutions to local problems that have been identified by the local people.*
- *Prevents and reduces the social, environmental and intimidatory factors which affect people's right to live without fear of crime and which impact upon their quality of life.*

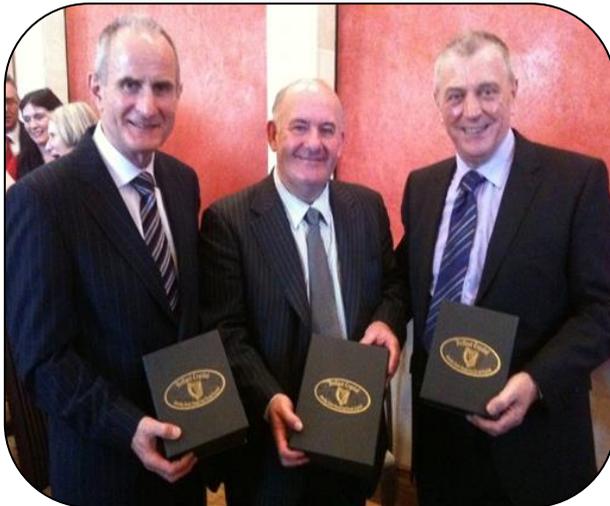
For the past two years BSCR have organised a number of camps for those children in the area 'most at risk' of becoming involved in anti-social and intercommunity violence. These camps have proved to be a very good way of keeping these young people out of trouble during periods of heightened tensions.

BSCR is committed to the meeting the challenge of engaging with individuals, particularly young people at risk through anti-social behaviour, substance misuse & criminal activity. Currently an application is with the BIG Lottery to develop a dedicated drop in Centre for disengaged young people. Programmes are organised currently with other social partners such as FASA to reduce and prevent substance abuse.

Building healthy and positive relationships among and between individuals and groups and inter-families is also a strategic aim for BSCR. Parenting classes, the development of Mums net and support to enable older people to feel safer in their homes all contribute to increasing individual safety and community confidence in the area. The mum's net aim is for mothers and their children to be able to come together with a variety of activities to make new friends, enjoy good conversation, and gain support when it is needed most.

## **Prison to Peace Project**

Belfast South Community Resources have participated in the Prison to Peace Programme since January 2009. This programme is funded under Peace III and BSCR is part of a consortium of ex-prisoner groups in Northern Ireland from both Loyalist and Republican backgrounds. The three main themes of the programme



are: Peace Building; Citizenship & Youth; Social Change and Leadership. Jackie McDonald, Community Development Officer for the programme, has been working with the established community organisations to promote peace and reconciliation in this part of the city. He keeps himself conversant with the good work already being done by these organisations and by constantly keeping in touch with community volunteers on the ground, helping to promote community safety throughout south Belfast.

A new programme has just started to bring together the two communities of Sandy Row and Short Strand together across different age groups to work on projects and undertake training. This project, which will run for two years addresses issues that impact adversely on both communities and the people who live there such as skills deficit and anti social behaviour.

It is harder to capture the impact and outcome of the work of these projects, particularly in the shorter term. There are no certificates awarded for feeling safer with increasing confidence to live in and enjoy your own community, better yet, to know that others also come to confidence to work and visit the area.

Safety and survival are our most basic needs. BSCR are committed to looking beyond addressing poverty and deprivation and all that results to enable Sandy Row and the adjoining areas to be places to “linger and not to leave”

### **Tackle economic and physical decline and general dereliction in the area.**

In the Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2011-2014, Sandy Row has been designated as one of ten Tourism Place Destinations. These represent areas within the city where there is, or there is planned to be, a concentration of tourist related activity e.g. attractions or services. Sandy Row will be part of the wider Department of Social Development’s master plan for the Shaftsbury area potentially to be commissioned later in 2012 and is currently part of the South West Belfast neighbourhood renewal partnership.

However, significant need has been identified by residents, traders and others to revitalise the improve physical units within the area especially on the front of the road. Vacant commercial units that are in various states of disrepair significantly reduce desirability of area and the proximity to the city centre gives a sense of

disadvantage juxtaposed with plenty, fostering a mind map and attitude within local residents that the opportunities for a revitalised community are literally “passing them by”. Developers continue to buy up local plots of land for redevelopment and people feel the sense of community is being eroded and want an input to the process of decision making around these developments.

Currently the Council is carrying out a Renewing the Routes programme in the neighbourhood as part of City wide initiative. Key priority themes for the area are covered in the South west Belfast Neighbourhood Action Plan which outlines a series of actions to be implemented up to March 2015 to bring about social, economic, physical and community renewal. In addition, DSD plans to commission a Development Framework for Shaftesbury Square and surrounding neighbourhoods in summer 2012 and the work of the NIHE Regeneration Directorate also provides opportunities for partnership working in the future.

BSCR is a significant partner in the work being undertaken to consider the feasibility of the development of the Gilpins Site. As indicated previously we see a need for a new purpose build centre on the site, the core for a new intergrated redevelopment plan for Sandy Row. Concerns have been expressed that the cultural history of Sandy Row seems to be diminishing and, it is feared, could be on the brink of disappearing altogether. We would like to see the Gilpins site contain a new Cultural Memory Centre which could be used to reflect the social and cultural heritage of the people . If the Gilpins Site is to capture a strong share of emerging market and land development opportunities, it must support and sustain certain existing community assets. These assets are the area’s jewels; they give the area its special character and identity. Such distinctive elements give the site and area a unique competitive advantage while also humanizing the environment and enhancing overall perceptions of the district. These assets are crucial to sustaining and improving the quality of life in the Gilpins Site, in Sandy Row as a whole and on a city wide basis.



BSCR is a central partner in all this work and are committed to a process and practice that looks at sites such as Gilpins and Blythefield School to see how these sites could be developed for the benefit of the local community and those who come to work in and visit the area.

The commitment to this work and the projects that address the issues seek to build upon the benefits of the work for the present and for the future.

- Increase Sandy Row local character and prosperity.
- Build strong communities by sustaining vibrant area and contributes to local causes.
- Ensure that important decisions are made locally by people who live in the community.
- Increase locally owned businesses have opportunities to recycle a much larger share of their revenue back into the local economy, enriching the whole community.
- Enable locally owned businesses to create more jobs.

For BSCR tackling economic and physical decline is not just about the brick and mortar of the buildings , it is about rebuilding the confidence and capacity of a community to help design and “own “ the buildings that surround their lives.

## **Reduce isolation of individuals and the area**

Previous sections of this report have referred to the legacy of the conflict and the impact upon the lives of individuals as invisible interface walls and at one time physical barriers were erected to cope with the violence and polarisation. Poverty and deprivation, the loss of a vibrant “front of the Row” and the gradual “cut off “ from the City Centre and the “Golden Mile” all contributed to increasing isolation of individuals and the area as a whole.

BSCR IS committed to creating opportunities that enables individuals to find the support they need and to encourage others to build bridges into and out of the area to reduce isolation and to capture the richness of shared opportunities for the future.

A **drop in facility** enables the community to find out what services are on offer in and around the local area while the advice clinic provides guidance to local residents on social and welfare issues and many more. BSCR also offers a service to the community to assist individuals with housing and benefit claims. Identifying need and signposting to other social partners and their agencies is a key element of the activities and process. Services users comment that it makes it convenient and easy for them as well as providing a central point of contact to get information, to express their concerns and issues, to find out what’s happening in their area or simply stop by for a cup of tea.

Belfast South Community Resources have now established linkages with a number of groups from across the sectarian divide including with Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre, Belfast Interface Project and Intercomm.

BSCR partnership working with Short Strand provides real opportunities to address

issues that impact in similar ways in our communities while enabling us to increase our understanding of diversity and difference.

BSCR is a member of the Good Relations Committee of the Village and Mid Donegall Road and supports the work being carried out by the South Belfast Round Table on Racism. We represent the views of the community through networks and partnerships at a strategic and operational level.

BSCR is committed to a belief that the future of our communities will be passed on to our young people and it is important that these young people, men and women are encouraged to play an active role in their own neighbourhoods. Part of what BSCR is trying to do is to give these future custodians of our communities a better insight into the history of the island and many of the events which took place both prior to and during the conflict. This information will better equip them to ensure a greater understanding of those from a different cultural background. Only by being equipped with the greater understanding can we ensure a lasting peaceful future for all our people.

BSCR organises Cultural Awareness Programmes for those who use our services. The programmes consist of a 12 week cultural awareness course interspersed with outings to sites throughout the North and South of Ireland. For example they visited the Irish Republican History Museum at Conway Mill on the Falls Road, Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin and the Somme centre. For many of the young people taking part this kind of visit represented a first for them as they had never envisaged meeting anyone who had been involved with Irish Republican Prisoners.



BSCR recognizes the importance too of celebrating the culture of the area and of sharing its rich history with others.

BSCR commissioned four major public art pieces for Sandy Row as part of its plans of the revitalisation of the area. The 4 stage project is situated throughout the area and includes two cultural murals, work in the, Community Garden and a “Weavers Bronze” a statue of a mill worker from the past

This exciting Community Art project is being delivered in partnership between the Sandy Row community and the Housing Executive over a period of one year. It aims to share with visitors and residents the rich culture and history of the area and provide a welcome to an area revitalized and contributing to its own regeneration.

**BSCR recognise the importance of the support for transition as the local community change to outward looking opportunities as the key to unlock the much needed socio-economic and physical regeneration for this Inner City community.**

It is part of the ongoing process which will stimulate community confidence, spur on economic investment and regeneration and enable Sandy Row to be recognised as a place with a history and a future that contributes to its status as a unique and iconic district in Belfast.

BSCR is committed to be the hub and heart of that process.

