



Good Relations & Shared Space Policy



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Introduction

This policy sets out a vision for the operation of the Innovation Factory (IF) as a shared space and a driver for social regeneration and improved community relations within the locality.

As IF is situated on what many people perceive as “a contested interface area”, we see this as a unique opportunity to be a catalyst for improved relationships within and between the communities that are adjacent to IF and the wider Forthriver Business Park. We want to play a role in shaping Belfast so that its spaces and services meet the needs and ambitions of all its people and improve the quality of life now and for future generations.

IF are fully committed to the fundamental imperative of engaging fully and proactively with all sections of the community, and see the realisation of the goals of our Community Engagement strategy as a key indicator on how the success of IF can be viewed.

This policy will utilise an approach that engages both the internal and external stakeholders of IF to achieve the greatest impact. For example, a range of policies are already in place to ensure that we will have a workforce that reflects the Community it serves and help facilitate the ethos of Good Relations and Shared Space.

Good Relations and shared space principles will also underpin and influence our relationships and interactions with all external stakeholders. For the purposes of this policy, external stakeholders will include (although not exclusively) the following:

- Political Representatives
- Community Groups
- Resident Associations
- Employment Initiatives
- Training Organisations
- Local Schools, Colleges and Universities
- Suppliers

We strongly believe that equality, good relations and shared space go hand-in-hand with economic regeneration and is central to attracting talent, sustaining inward investment, enticing foreign direct investment and tackling poverty.

IF have committed significant resources and expertise to the achievement of these goals in the form of a community engagement team who not only want to ensure that fairness, equality and respect are at the heart of everything we do, but will also recognise and grasp opportunities that promote, transform and embed good relations outcomes.

Promoting the Principles of Good Relations & Shared Space

Promoting equality, good relations and creating shared space is a key priority for IF, and to demonstrate our commitment we have developed this Good Relations and Shared Space Policy as the key outcomes under priority 1 of our wider Social Integration & Community Engagement Plan – To devise a clear and explicit Shared Space Policy to ensure that IF remains a neutral, safe and welcoming environment where all members of the community, tenants, users and visitors feel comfortable and safe.

This will strongly influence all our work whether that be business growth, business innovation or our objectives under social regeneration.

The development of this policy involved consultation and advice from key stakeholders including the Belfast City Council Good Relations Unit and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, and was influenced by the aims of the Community Relations Council for Northern Ireland and the new government strategy – Together Building a United Community.

Whilst not actually obligated under any legislation, IF would like to take that step beyond compliance to demonstrate active commitment to the following ideals to fully endorse and meet Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act of 1998, to have due regard to the need to promote the equality of opportunity:

- Between persons of different religious beliefs, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- Between men and women generally
- Between persons with a disability and persons without

In addition, under Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act, we will demonstrate that IF will have regard to the desirability of promoting Good Relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial groups.

Shared Space

Our objective is to manage the IF as a shared space where diversity of culture and heritage can be enjoyed in an environment of respect and acceptance.

We will therefore adopt the following principles for Shared Space where the IF site will be:

- **Welcoming**
where people feel secure to take part in unfamiliar interactions and increase an overall sense of shared space and community
- **Accessible**
well-connected in terms of transport and pedestrian links within a network of similar spaces across the City and managed to promote maximum participation by all communities
- **Good Quality**
attractive, high quality unique services and well-designed buildings and spaces
- **Safe**
for all persons and groups and trusted by both locals and visitors

Embracing Good Relations & Shared Space

For IF to be truly recognised as a shared space and a driver for meaningful improvements in Good Relations the following commitments will be delivered:

- Ensure that all IF facilities are safe and welcoming for staff, tenants and external stakeholders
- Treat all employees, tenants, users and IF stakeholders with dignity and respect
- Implement a duty of Good Relations and shared space in the workplace amongst employees and tenants contributing to a positive working environment, free from political, religious or racial discrimination, harassment or victimisation
- Aspire to the development of a good and harmonious working environment (Please refer to Annex 1 for outline of IF Good and Harmonious Working Policy)
- Incorporate awareness of Good Relations Duties and Shared Space in to the induction of all new employees
- Initiate and implement a Good Relations awareness training programme as mandatory for all staff, with the view of creating a positive inclusive ethos where issues can be openly discussed
- Monitor IF Good Relations and Shared Space Policies on an annual basis
- Report to the Springvale multi agency group on a quarterly basis to review and progress Good Relations and Shared Space issues associated with the operation of the Innovation Factory
- Take all complaints of harassment or discrimination seriously and deal with them in an effective and professional manner
- Discuss Good Relations/Shared Space and promote policy awareness when negotiating and agreeing tenancy agreements
- Offer and facilitate Good Relations training provision to all tenants and where appropriate users of the centre
- Facilitate positive local engagement to include under-represented groups by creating real and meaningful connections between the Innovation Factory, its tenants and the local community
- Evaluate positively on sub-contract/supplier tenders that increase the economic, social and environmental benefits for the local economy and community

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- Consider compliance with Equality and Diversity, Modern Slavery and Fair Employment legislation when contemplating the appointment of sub-contractors/suppliers
 - Make a positive contribution to the personal development needs of members of the community from a variety of backgrounds including those traditionally considered “hard to reach” and the long-term unemployed
 - Form relationships with local Employment Initiatives/training organisations to ensure people from the community are aware of vacancies and pre-employment programmes, have access to recruitment support and can utilise placement provision to gain exposure to the workplace and up to date work experience and skills
 - Engage strategically with schools to facilitating placement opportunities, mentoring provision and coordinate competitions to inspire and widen the horizons of young people from the local community
 - Actively target, exploit and monitor potential sources of external support funding to secure monies to broaden and sustain the overall impact of the Innovation Factory, by targeting under-represented groups contributing to economic growth and social regeneration
 - Facilitate two shared community events related to the work of the Innovation Factory within the first twelve months of operation to promote the benefits of shared space

Desired Outcomes

As stated IF want to play a role in shaping Belfast so that its spaces and services meet the needs and ambitions of all its people and for the immediate community to feel connected and *“part of the IF experience”*.

By meeting our commitments and pledges, as detailed above, IF can have an influence on:

- Improving connectivity with stakeholders and surrounding neighbourhoods
- Improving employability through the facilitation of work placements, skills development and industry recognised qualifications
- Developing a sense of ownership of new shared spaces
- Enhancing understanding of different cultural traditions and enhanced appreciation of diversity
- Increasing social capital and the capacity to deal with issues of conflict
- Changing perceptions from ethno political spaces to civic space that is shared across age groups, ability, background and gender
- Growing the local economy and reducing poverty
- Improving the quality of life now and for future generations

Conclusion

The IF Community Engagement Officer will report to the O on a quarterly basis which will act as a forum to discuss and review progress, and be the primary sounding board to address any issues that may emerge; and provide solutions related to Good Relations and Shared Space associated with the operations of the IF.

IF will also proactively take up additional invitations from other economic and community forums and groups to provide progress updates on issues of good relations and shared space. IF will also work closely with relevant stakeholders, such as the Belfast City Council Good Relations Unit, to review policy, take guidance and facilitate training provision.

Annex 1

Outline of IF Good & Harmonious Working Policy

We are committed to the promotion of Good Relations in the delivery of all our services and aspire to treat all employees, IF users and other stakeholders with dignity and respect. We are proud to be a space in which everyone from the surrounding community can feel safe and welcome free from political, religious or racial discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

To do this, we will be mindful and appreciative of the local community's diverse cultural identity and will not permit anything on or within the vicinity of the Innovation Factory, which could be perceived as causing any offence to the wider community. This will include flags, artwork (such as murals), graffiti and any other demarcations which could cause IF to be unwelcoming to any person from the surrounding community. Should anything appear within the site that could be perceived as causing an offence, we will have such items removed in consultation and collaboration with members of the local community and relevant agencies, if appropriate. In addition, as this is a new Shared Space development within the locality, we also want to be sensitive to ensuring that people from

all the surrounding communities feel safe and welcome while in the vicinity of the Factory; as staff, visitors, suppliers or users. Therefore, while within the Factory and its grounds, it will not be permissible to wear any items of clothing or emblems that could make someone from a different political, racial or religious background feel uncomfortable. This would include sporting jerseys, scarfs and hats that are aligned with one particular section of the community. Where there is a breach of the intention of this aspect of the policy, the person will be asked to remove the item.

In this regard, prevention is better than cure. Therefore, in publishing this Plan, we hope that everyone who comes in to contact with IF will acknowledge and accept that it will be a place that anyone, regardless of their political, religious or racial background, can fully participate, feel safe & welcome in and ultimately achieve their potential.

We aim to continuously review this aspect of the policy to see how it can be developed as IF grows and develops in the future.

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