

**Policy Screening
ACNI Artist in Residence Programme
2026/27**

31st March 2026

Name of the policy

ACNI Artist in Residence Programme
2026/27 _____

Is this an existing, revised or a new programme?

This is a new programme by ACNI and funded by National Lottery Funding.

What is it trying to achieve? (intended aims/outcomes)

Purpose

In February 2025, ACNI received a Letter of Expectations from DfC Minister outlining priorities around supporting those who are underrepresented in the arts sector, in particular younger people from more deprived areas, those living in rural areas and areas distant from Belfast, those not currently engaged in arts activities.

In response, ACNI has designed the Artist in Residence in Local Authorities Programme which aims to encourage deeper collaborations and partnerships with local councils as well as fostering community engagement at a grassroots level between artists and residents living within the local authority area.

Participating in the arts and coming together as communities can make a vital contribution to improving health and wellbeing, building confidence and integrating communities. This programme presents an opportunity for greater participation in the arts across every section of society and potential for employment of 11 artists over the next 2 years.

This will be an open-ended programme based around specific needs and circumstances in each local authority area. Applications for work that involves young people and hard to reach groups as identified by each local authority will be prioritised.

Part 1. Policy scoping

Information about the programme

In April 2024, Arts Council NI commissioned a survey looking into the working and living conditions of artists in N.I. ([Arts Council of Northern Ireland Working and Living Conditions of Artists in Northern Ireland](#))

The Artist in Residence Programme was designed informed by this survey and in consideration of the Minister's letter of expectations. seeking regional collaboration and creating 11 jobs in regional areas for artists.

A pilot Artist in Residence Programme was launched in 2025/26, with ACNI conducting in person consultations with each Local Authority, prior to a follow up all-Council meeting to discuss the scheme in greater detail. Time was prohibitive to the ARP pilot due to being mid financial year, with some LAs having already committed their activity budget for that year and some LA's had more flexibility, albeit long internal processes to undertake to permit participating in the Pilot.

Applications were encouraged from all 11 local authority areas, with 4 finally being in receipt of funding. Under-represented LA's within current funding programmes were particularly encouraged to apply; Antrim & Newtownabbey, Ards & North Down,

Causeway Coast & Glens, Fermanagh & Omagh, Lisburn & Castlereagh, Mid & East Antrim, Mid Ulster and Newry, Mourne & Down. Each Local Authority area could apply for up to £10,000 from ACNI with the expectation this will be 50% matched by participating Local Authorities, this would provide a total annual salary of £20,000 per artist in the ARP scheme.

The arts are vital to the NI social and economic environment; driving employment, immigration, tourism, and fostering a creative economy in which business can thrive. Supporting our artists helps to enhance their creativity, develop new skills, and expand their artistic horizons. Investment in the arts sector facilitates high quality artistic products to attract inward investment and creates opportunities for generating income.

The ACNI Artist in Residence Programme aligns with ACNI's mission to develop and champion the arts through investment, as set out in its [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Strategic Plan 2024-34](#) 10 Year Strategy for the Arts. This Artist in Residence programme contributes to the indicators with the [PfG Wellbeing Framework](#) addressing one of the 9 high-level priorities;

- ***Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy;*** the arts and creativity play in our educational system is fundamental to a competitive economy, creativity is integral to achieving success in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

Reflective of these two PfG priorities, the Artist in Residence Programme, based within Local Authority areas, has outlined these objectives and can also be shown to directly contribute towards two of the Department for Communities priorities in its Corporate Strategy – Building Inclusive Communities 2020-25, including:

- Support cultural and community confidence, participation and wellbeing through direction and support to the creative industries, museums, libraries, sport and arts, culture and heritage sectors
- Incentivise, support and enhance community empowerment through an innovative and sustainable community and voluntary sector

The Artist in Residency Programme has been established and designed in cognisance and direct responses to Minister's letter of expectations; towards regional collaboration/distribution and ACNI's own research into the [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Working and Living Conditions of Artists in Northern Ireland](#)¹ This programme contributes to addressing the working and living conditions of artists, by means of creating 11 new positions of paid employment for each artist within a local authority area. Each artist will be remunerated at least £15,000 per year and expected to work on a part time basis with standard holiday allowance.

This National Lottery investment focuses on achieving; Outcome 2 'A sector that develops, looks after its people, and is more inclusive' and Priority 3 'We will create the conditions to grow artistic talent and develop the wider arts workforce'.

The Artist in Residence Programme based within the 11 Local Authority areas, further supports and aligns to the broader policy ecosystem by delivering practical, targeted support that advances long-term strategic goals around inclusion, regional balance, equality of opportunity, and community-level engagement in the arts. Each Local Authority will ensure compliance, equality and accessibility within their own constituency data, cognisance of regional disparities.

The Artist in Residence Programme 2026/27 has a defined set of clear parameters for its strategic programme context, including the four-assessment criterion. Both stipulations address the aims and objectives of the programme. The aims and objectives both support and encourage greater opportunities, community cohesion, exploration and strategic sustainability within arts in N. Ireland.

Programme objectives:

- Potential employment for 11 artists 2026/27.
- Strengthened capacity of local groups to engage with the arts
- Improved understanding and appreciation of the value of the arts amongst local authorities and willingness to invest in arts activity
- Enhanced dialogue and engagement between Local Authorities and Arts Managers and the Arts Council

Local Authority compliance within the ARP application:

- Clear and proportionate breakdown and allocation of the total project budget to include ACNI contribution.
- Project end date and expenditure end date
- Description of the arts activities which would take place during the Artist in Residency award
- Description of the objectives, potential activities and expected outputs planned under the ARP.
- Brief how the ARP will create enhanced arts participation, beneficiaries, targeted activities to meet objectives.
- Recruitment process of the Local Authority to ensure equity and equal opportunities are adhered to.
- Description of monitoring and objectives capturing processes by local authority.

Evaluation management:

- If the award met the objectives of the programme for each artist and Local Authority.
- Evidence of the impact of the project for the artists and their beneficiaries.

SRO Project Manager will be responsible for the completion of the Post Project Evaluations. A survey will be completed by each grant awardee. A PPE will be completed by the Strategic Development and Partnerships team within 3 months of the end date of each artist's annual contract.

This programme is inclusive and flexible within its applicant eligibility, in that is aimed at partnership between NI Artists and the 11 Local Authority areas within N.I and delivering against the above Government, ACNI and Local Authority objectives.

Our Outcomes

ACNI has a set of outcomes for the arts sector, and a set of outcomes for the society.

Arts Sector

- A sector that develops and looks after its people and is more inclusive.
- A sector that is more supported to develop through experimentation and innovation.
- A sector that facilitates platforming and visibility of grassroots organisations.

Society

- People from all backgrounds can enjoy arts experiences.
- Development and evolution of creativity, diversity, innovation and inclusion.
- A sector that is more valued across society and government.

The outcomes overlap with one another and are reliant on one another. These detailed below are illustrative of the programme and its alignment to ACNI's business and strategy plan for engagement and development for 2025-2026 and the draft Engagement and Partnership Plan 2026/2027.

These outcomes are aligned with increasing our strategic outcome around “a sector that is more valued across society and government”, our engagement and partnership work seeks to:

- Strengthen our strategic relationships to scale impact for artists and communities around creative health, education, creative industries and climate change
- Deepen our work with local authorities around supporting artists practice and increasing our understanding of the impact that arts participation has on people's lives
- Increase resources (monetary and non-monetary) so more people from all backgrounds can enjoy arts experiences and artists and arts organisations can engage in more experimentation and innovation.

Local Authority arts collaborations include:

- A key focus is on creative health engagement, how arts organisations and artists help deliver key health outcomes.
- Strengthen our networks with the Community and Health Sector.
- Raised visibility of artists' contribution to public value.
- Support efforts by arts organisations to increase audiences, participation engagement with underrepresented groups.
- Strengthen engagement with artists, arts organisations, local authorities and grassroots and community organisations.
- Monitoring of underrepresented groups and geographic areas.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?

If so, explain how.

The purpose of this programme is that all Section 75 categories will benefit from this policy. However, ACNI understands there may be potential barriers for some groups within this programme. If and when these are potentially identified, ACNI will redress with specific actions in place to improve access for these groups. Each Local Authority will ensure compliance, equality and accessibility within their own constituency data, cognisance of regional disparities.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

ACNI responded to the artist consultation and reported, [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Working and Living Conditions of Artists in Northern Ireland](#)² with strong cognisance of the [PfG Wellbeing Framework](#)¹, specifically addressing two of the 9 high-level priorities; including the **Minister's letter of expectations**; toward deeper regional collaboration/distribution. Many funded artists deliver arts projects which contribute to the growth of arts in the community for new and existing audiences, and to which reflect the diversity of Northern Ireland's society and culture. The Councils and their Arts Managers will select their priority topic and subject matter for the artist to explore with the community. These would also have to complement ACNI's priorities, with each Local Authority Council deciding what their specific needs are. Expressions of interest/applications from Local Authorities undergo rigorous assessment and moderation stages before any awards are made.

As the development and funding agency for the arts in Northern Ireland, ACNI distributes public money, this programme will invest up to £330k in funds from Department for Communities to support the delivery from its pilot inception to completion in 2027/28.

There will be no displacement of services through the implementation of this programme.

Who owns and who implements the policy?

ACNI is the agency responsible for the implementation and administration of the Artist in Residency Programme. All Local Authority organisations applying will be welcome to contact ACNI for further advice in advance of making an application.

All applications will be judged on merit, regardless of any previous relationship with ACNI or DfC.

Implementation factor

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the programme? No.

If yes, are they

☐

financial

☐

legislative

☐

other, please specify _____

Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the programme will impact upon?

☐

staff

☒

service users

✓	other public sector organisations
✓	voluntary/community/trade unions
✓	other, please specify - commercial organisations/venues

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

The following existing Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) funding schemes support or complement the aims of the Artist in Residence Programme. All are owned and implemented by ACNI:

1. Annual Funding Programme (AFP) – Provides core and programming support for key arts organisations across Northern Ireland. It shares the Artist in Residence Programme placed within each participating Local Authority area and their own unique priorities surrounding topics such as engagement, access, and inclusion, particularly for communities underrepresented in the arts; this will be actioned under each Local Authority Council's EDI Policy.
2. National Lottery Project Funding – Offers medium-scale project support and targets equality of access for Section 75 groups, mirroring the Artist in Residence Programme priorities around engagement, access, and inclusion, particularly for communities underrepresented in the arts; this will be actioned under each Local Authority Council's EDI Policy, their own unique set of priorities.
3. Support for Individual Artists Programme (SIAP) – Supports individual artists, including those from minority or marginalised backgrounds. While focused on individuals rather than organisations, it complements the Artist in Residence Programme priorities around wider engagement, access, and inclusion, particularly for communities underrepresented in the arts. This will be actioned under each Local Authority Council's EDI Policy by enabling more inclusive programming and participation; further supported under each Local Authority Council's EDI Policy and their own unique set of priorities.
4. Small Capital Grants Programme – Funds improvements to physical spaces that increase accessibility for disabled and older people, thus indirectly supporting the aims of Artist in Residence Programme, when projects take place in these enhanced venues within each participating Local Authority area.
5. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Policy and Action Plan (2024–34) – Provides the strategic framework for advancing equality across all ACNI programmes. The Artist in Residence Programme operationalises this policy by the expectations all participating Local Authority Councils adopt all Section 75 requirements and their own EDI Policies.
6. The Rural Engagement Programme and the Ethnic Minority Residency Programmes, their associated priorities and outcomes, are indirectly addressed within The Artist in Residence Programme via each participating Local Authority Council utilising their unique locality requirements, outside of Belfast.

ACNI Data as noted below.

Available evidence

Data Sources:

- AFS Survey 2024-2025
- Working and Living Conditions of artists survey 2024
- ACNI EQIA Reporting 2023-2024
- NISRA Census 2021
- Continuous Household Survey 2023-2024

While this data shows strong overall engagement, it highlights some disparities related to gender, disability, age, deprivation, and caring responsibilities. These findings reinforce the importance of targeted measures—such as accessibility support and outreach to marginalised groups—within the Artist in Residency Programme, to promote equality of opportunity and reduce barriers to participation. Each Local Authority will ensure compliance, equality and accessibility within their own constituency data, cognisance of regional disparities.

Section 75 Data – AFS Survey Data 2024-2025

Religion

Religious faith	Managers	Specialist Staff	Artists	Other Staff	Total
Buddhist	2	1	5	0	8
Catholic	85	84	208	228	605
Protestant	41	52	136	167	396
Hindu	0	6	11	0	17
Islam/Muslim	0	0	0	3	3
Jewish	0	0	0	0	0
Sikh	0	0	0	0	0
Other religious faith	38	58	151	60	307
No Religious Faith	6	0	43	5	54
Religious faith not listed specify here	0	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	63	76	254	51	444
Not known	140	1,063	6,146	476	7,825
Total	375	1,340	6,954	990	9,659

ACNI captures religious belief across all sections of all staff, this data represents a sample of the Annual Funding Organisations. Each annually funded body was asked to give a breakdown of their staff, the majority of which responded with not known, prefer not to say, no specified in survey and no religious faith. This illustrates that within the majority of organisations, there is a continuous shift towards non-identity of religion, 605 respondents identified as Catholic and 396 identified as Protestant. Ethnic minority religions are underrepresented in arts organisations Northern Ireland.

The continuous household survey shows that religious background makes a slight difference in engagement, with Protestant respondents (81%) showing marginally

higher engagement than Catholics (79%), though both were close to the population average.

Political Opinion

In this screening and to date, there has been no suggestion that any political grouping suffers any adverse impact in accessing and participating in the arts in Northern Ireland. There is no evidence from any monitoring returns of any negative impact with regards to political opinion.

There has been an historical tendency for voting preferences in Northern Ireland to closely reflect the religious affiliations of the population. This implies that those issues and differentials identified in relation to persons of different religion may also impact on persons of different political opinion.

Ethnicity

ACNI captures data on ethnicity of employees working within Annual Funding Programme organisations:

Ethnicity	Managers	Specialist Staff	Artists	Other Staff	Total
White	326	440	3,815	753	5,334
Irish Traveller			8		8
Roma					
Chinese			31	2	33
Indian		5	21	4	30
Pakistani			5	2	7
Bangladeshi			1		1
Other Asian			8	6	14
Asian not listed, please specify here					
Black Caribbean		1	11		12
Black African		2	50		52
Black Other			36	2	38
Black not listed, please specify here					
Arab			20	1	21
Filipino					
Mixed Ethnic Group	3	2	121	7	133
Other Ethnic Group				2	2
Ethnic group not listed, please specify here			78	11	89
Unspecified or Uncollected	11	523	540	14	1,088
Not Known	33	357	2,231	185	2,806
Total	373	1,330	6,976	989	9,668

In 2024-2025, the majority of staffing within ACNI funded arts organisations, was still predominately white with 3,815 respondents return. The second largest response was from those that did not specify, unknown or ethnicity not listed. Ethnic minorities are still largely underrepresented with only 390 respondents across arts organisations identified as a minority out of 6,976. There is still an increasing underrepresentation across the board ACNI arts funded organisations, this could also partially be due to the population demographics of Northern Ireland as per NISRA 2021 census data and entry points into the arts sector.

This is highlighted in the NISRA census data below from 2021, where whilst ethnic minorities have gained in population since 2001, it has been still at a low % rate.

Ethnic Group	2001 Count	2001 %	2011 Count	2011 %	2021 Count	2021 %
White	1,671,013	99.15%	1,778,449	98.21%	1,837,575	96.55%
Irish Traveller	1,685	0.10%	1,287	0.07%	2,609	0.14%
Roma	N/D	N/D	14	0.00%	1,529	0.08%
Other	12,569	0.75%	31,113	1.72%	61,466	3.23%
Total	1,685,267	100%	1,810,863	100%	1,903,179	100%

[Census 2021 - Briefing](#)

In 2024, a Working and Living Conditions of artists survey was undertaken by [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Working and Living Conditions of Artists in Northern Ireland](#) This survey came after the 2010 Report on the working conditions of artists in Republic and Northern Ireland. The 2024 report produced stark findings and evidence of precarious working conditions to include artists Wellbeing and Mental Health. The main challenges faced by artists in Northern Ireland are financial barriers (80%), time constraints (60%), job insecurity (59%), and feelings of not being valued (54%) of the % of artists with a degree or background in health, evidence of not feeling valued, evidence of higher levels of anxiety.

Age

ACNI captures data on the age range of employees working within Annual Funding Programme organisations:

Age	Managers	Specialist Staff	Artists	Other Staff	Total
0-15	0	0	4	0	4
16-24	2	20	120	116	258

25-34	19	77	408	156	660
35-44	51	77	369	97	594
45-54	70	68	301	84	523
55-64	46	36	153	47	282
65+	11	7	39	15	72
Prefer Not to Say	4	60	202	0	266
Not known	9	156	1891	376	2432
Total	212	501	3487	891	5091

In 2023-2024, the age range for ACNI arts funded organisations highlights that majority of staffing lie between 25 and 34 and 35 and 44. This demonstrates that young, training and/or skilled staff are underpinning arts organisations. The second highest is between 45-54 and 55 and 64 categories which may represent senior level management of organisations. Although the lowest number of age-related staff is 65+, this may represent a more voluntary base workforce in arts organisations.

According to the Continuous Household Survey 2023/24, 80% of adults in Northern Ireland engaged in the arts either by attending or participating in activities. However, engagement varied notably across demographic groups. Engagement differs across age groups, with younger adults (16–24) reporting 88% engagement, compared to 69% among those aged 75 and over, indicating a participation gap linked to age and potentially mobility or access.

ACNI also captures data on disability access within annually funded organisations under the following headings:

- Captioning
- British Sign Language
- Irish Sign Language
- Audio described
- Hearing support loop
- Large print / braille for programmes
- Wheelchair access
- Relaxed performances

Disability 2024-2025

Classification	Managers	Specialist Staff	Artists	Other Staff	Total
Disabled	25	30	161	50	266
Non-Disabled	220	301	1,502	522	2,545
Prefer not to say	14	6	45	24	89

Not known	87	968	5,085	371	6,511
Total	346	1,305	6,793	967	9,411

In 2024-2025, the disability range for ACNI arts funded organizations highlights that majority of artists are nondisabled, with 89 respondents preferring not to say.

The data below refers to the total number of organisations (89) with some activities available within each of the accessibility types.

Support	Number of organisations	% of portfolio
Braille	13	0.146067
Large print	24	0.26966
Induction loop	11	0.1235955
Captioning	28	0.3146067
Audio Description	20	0.224719
BSL interpreter	29	0.3258427
ISL interpreter	13	0.146067
Wheelchair access	6	0.0674157
Accessible toilets	6	0.0674157
Lifts	14	0.157303
Signage	14	0.157303
Maps	17	0.1910111236
Relaxed performances	33	0.3707865
Dementia friendly	30	0.33707865
Multisensory workshops	33	0.3707865

Disability access across the arts sector in 2024-2025, suggests that venues are taking into consideration the needs of disability audiences and facilities accessible but also attendance and participatory elements as well, that require descriptive signage and mapping.

According to the Continuous Household Survey, adults without disabilities were significantly more likely to engage in the arts (85%) than those with disabilities (63%), highlighting an important area for continued access support.

Men and women generally:

According to the Continuous Household Survey 2023/24, 80% of adults in Northern Ireland engaged in the arts either by attending or participating in activities. However, engagement varied notably across demographic groups. Women reported higher levels of engagement (83%) than men (78%), continuing a consistent gender trend observed in previous years.

Dependants

Engagement was also lower among individuals with dependants (77%) compared to those without (82%), and among those living in the most deprived areas (74%) compared to the least deprived (86%), according to the Continuous Household Survey.

Marital Status

Differences also emerged in the Continuous Household Survey by marital status: people who were married or cohabiting had an engagement rate of 83%, single individuals reported 82%, while widowed adults had a substantially lower engagement rate of 63%, and those separated or divorced reported 75%. This may suggest specific barriers faced by older or formerly married individuals.

Sexual orientation

The Continuous Household Survey does not report arts engagement by sexual orientation, and therefore no disparities can be identified from this data source. While no evidence currently highlights specific barriers linked to this category, the absence of detailed data on LGBTQ+ participation or on people of different marital status represents a limitation in the available evidence base. The Small Grants Programme addresses this by being open to all eligible organisations regardless of sexual orientation or family status, and by encouraging inclusive programming that welcomes participants from all backgrounds. These findings reinforce the importance of continued outreach, inclusive design, and targeted support for underrepresented groups to ensure that all communities in Northern Ireland can access and benefit from the arts.

Needs, experiences and priorities

Section 75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Religious belief	There is no indication of any inequality in access to the arts based on religious belief. Due to the complexities in the subject matter, many respondents to the survey, do not provide this information. This makes it difficult to ascertain the true nature and breakdown of survey participants by religious affiliation. However, in relation to arts access, a proportion of arts related activities by funded organisations are done so through community development and or cross community.
Political opinion	Political opinion is another complex topic and would explain why due to historic circumstances, it can correlate religious belief with political opinion and determine that there is no evidence for any inequality in arts provision by political opinion.
Racial group	Northern Ireland has a small ethnic minority and racial community in comparison to the UK and this is highlighted in the response and proportion of respondents in the arts sector. The size of the sample

	makes it difficult to predict trends, however the ethnic population growth in the last ten years highlights a 1.5% jump between 2011-2021.
Age	Young people have considerably higher attendance and participation in the arts than any other age group, and older people have lower attendance and participation. The Arts Council recognise both these age groups in their targeted programmes, recognising the formative influence of the arts on young people and the wellbeing benefits observed with older people. ACNI have an Arts and Older People Programme as well as The Young People and Wellbeing Programme is an arts focused National Lottery funded programme through the Arts Council of NI. It aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people (aged between 12-18) by engagement in high quality arts and is based on a programme (Articulate). Our evidence highlights that issues of mobility that could be related to age are potentially limiting engagement.
Marital status	Marital status does not necessarily prevent working in the arts sector for any marital status, however it is likely that age, family commitments and childcare can.
Sexual orientation	Our evidence does not highlight any specific data gaps or targeted support needs related to sexual orientation. However, qualitative findings from the Annual Report reference strong engagement with LGBTQ+ communities in general, and through specific events such as the Outburst Queer Arts Festival, indicating active inclusion in industry activity.
Men and Women Generally	Our evidence indicates strong participation by women in the arts. For example, women represent 60% of the workforce of our sample of national lottery organisations and Annually Funded Organisations, with men, 38%. Only 1% of the workforce identify as non-binary (including androgyne).
Disability	Our Client Satisfaction Survey highlights the need for stronger support for artists with disabilities in terms of support when completing applications. We will continue our work with University of Atypical, where this type of support is provided to artists applying to our programmes.
Dependants	Our evidence does not highlight any specific data gaps or targeted support needs related to dependants.

Part 2: Screening questions

Details of the likely policy impacts on Religious Belief:

The Artist in Residence Programme is open to all 11 Local Authority Councils. No adverse impact is expected.

Level of impact: Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on Political Opinion:

The programme is politically neutral but operates in a region where political opinion and religious background can intersect. The programme aims to reach diverse communities across all council areas, ensuring political inclusivity.

Level of impact: Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on Racial Group:

The Artist in Residence Programme does not explicitly target any racial group, due determined priorities being specific to each Local Authority Council area, including their associated EDI policy. **Level of impact:** Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on Age:

The Artist in Residence Programme is open to all 11 Local Authority Councils. Each Local Authority Council area will adopt their own determined priorities and EDI policy.

Level of impact: Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on Marital Status:

No barriers are presented based on marital status. While not explicitly targeted, the programme's community-based approach is inclusive of family-oriented and single-person households.

Level of impact: None

Details of the likely policy impacts on Sexual Orientation:

The programme is inclusive of LGBTQ+ organisations and encourages participation from all sexual orientations. There is no evidence of structural exclusion.

Level of impact: None

Details of the likely policy impacts on Men and Women:

The programme encourages applications from a wide range of organisations and participants regardless of gender. There is currently no evidence of gender imbalance in participation.

Level of impact: None

Details of the likely policy impacts on Disability:

The Artist in Residence Programme is open to all 11 Local Authority Councils. Each Local Authority Council area will adopt their own determined priorities and EDI policy. Persons and artists with disabilities, may be indirectly benefitted via each Local Authority EDI Policies.

Level of impact: Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on Dependants:

The Artist in Residence Programme is open to all 11 Local Authority Councils. Each Local Authority Council area will adopt their own determined priorities and EDI policy. Persons and artists who may be dependants, may be indirectly benefitted via each Local Authority EDI Policies.

Level of impact: Minor

Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within Section 75 equalities categories?

Religious Belief – Yes

The programme is open to all communities and encourages cross-community and interfaith participation. It offers an opportunity to promote shared experiences through the arts and to support organisations working in areas with historical community division.

Political Opinion – Yes

While politically neutral, the Artist in Residence Programme adopts ACNI's EDI policy and Section 75, with the expectation that each Local Authority Council should adhere to its own EDI and section 75 policies, and to create opportunities to promote engagement across political identities, especially in post-conflict contexts.

Racial Group – Yes

The Artist in Residence Programme, open to all 11 council areas, with expectations each Local Authority Council adhere its own EDI and section 75 policies, and to create opportunities to promote engagement across racial identities, especially in post-conflict contexts.

Age – Yes

The Artist in Residence Programme can support projects that engage both younger and older people, helping to address social isolation and improve wellbeing.

Marital Status – No

Marital status does not present a barrier to arts participation, and there is no evidence that specific outreach or adjustments are needed on this basis. The programme remains inclusive to all applicants regardless of marital status.

Sexual Orientation – Yes

The programme is open to LGBTQ+ organisations and audiences. It provides a platform to promote representation and inclusion through funded arts projects. Continued outreach and visibility of LGBTQ+ inclusion will help maximise this opportunity.

Men and Women – Yes

The programme can help address any imbalances in participation by supporting a diverse range of projects, including those that challenge gender stereotypes or create opportunities for marginalised gender identities in the arts.

Disability – Yes

Artist in Residence Programme does not include accessibility costs (e.g. transport, sign language, visual aids), this will be covered by each participating Local Authority Council.

Dependants – Yes

Artist in Residence Programme has expectations that provision for childcare support, or family-friendly, opportunity for carers and people with dependants, within its budget and EDI policy.

To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion, or racial group?

Details of the likely policy impacts on Religious Belief:

By encouraging applications from all local authority areas and supporting cross-community participation, the programme contributes positively to building mutual understanding and respect through shared cultural activity.

What is the level of impact? Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on Political Opinion:

While the programme does not take a political stance, it fosters participation across Northern Ireland's diverse communities, including areas traditionally associated with differing political identities. This creates opportunities for collaborative arts engagement that can improve understanding across political divides.

What is the level of impact? Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on Racial Group:

Artist in Residence Programme is reliant upon each Local Authority Council to adhere to its EDI Policies and section 75 and address its own specific community needs.

What is the level of impact? Minor

Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion, or racial groups?

Religious Belief – Yes

Artist in Residence Programme is reliant upon each Local Authority Council adhering to its EDI Policies and Section 75, with the indirect potential to support arts projects that facilitate dialogue, shared cultural experiences, and mutual understanding between people of different religious backgrounds. Cross-community arts projects have a long history of contributing to peacebuilding and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, and the programme can further enable this by prioritising participation in underrepresented areas.

Political Opinion – Yes

While the programme is politically neutral, it has the potential to support inclusive participation from communities with different political traditions. By funding arts initiatives in both unionist and nationalist areas, and those involving cross-community engagement, the programme can contribute to reducing division and fostering respectful coexistence.

Racial Group – Yes

The programme presents an opportunity to promote intercultural understanding via arts projects. It can also support initiatives that address racism and promote inclusion through the arts, helping to improve community relations across racial and ethnic lines.

Multiple Identity

People can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Are there any potential impacts of the policy or decision on people with multiple identities?

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories.

No adverse impacts are anticipated for people with multiple identities. The Artist in Residence Programme is reliant upon each local authority area making decisions upon

their specific needs. ACNI are reliant upon each Local Authority Council to follow their own EDI policy.

At present, Section 75 monitoring is collected on a category-by-category basis (e.g. disability, age, ethnicity) and does not allow for reliable cross-tabulation or analysis of intersectional experiences. As such, no direct data exists on the impact of this programme on people with multiple identities.

However, ACNI recognises that multiple identity analysis is important for understanding the lived experiences of underrepresented groups. Opportunities exist to strengthen this through internal evaluation mechanisms, including future monitoring and potential clustering analysis to assess how overlapping identities may influence participation and access. This will be reviewed as part of ongoing efforts to improve data collection and equality analysis.

Part 3. Screening decision

An equality impact assessment (EQIA) is not required for this policy.

The Artist in Residency Programme has been designed to increase participation in the arts by promoting equality of opportunity across all Section 75 categories. The policy targets groups and geographic areas that are underrepresented in existing funding programmes. Each Local Authority Council is expected to adhere to its section 75 and EDI policy, aligning with ACNI's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Policy and 10-Year Strategic Plan.

There is no indication that any of the protected characteristic groups will be discriminated against as a result of this programme. There is no evidence to suggest the policy will result in adverse or disproportionate impact on any Section 75 group or on people with multiple identities. Instead, the likely impact is positive and supportive of the statutory equality and good relations duties. Where monitoring highlights potential areas for improvement (e.g. intersectionality or access among specific groups), these can be addressed through programme evaluation and future design, rather than through a full EQIA.

No mitigation or alternative policy is required. The Artist in Residency Programme has been designed to actively promote equality of opportunity and good relations. It includes targeted measures to increase access among Section 75 groups and those from underrepresented geographic areas, with clear eligibility criteria, support mechanisms, and a commitment to inclusive practice.

Although no adverse impacts have been identified in the programme during its initial period, ACNI will continue to monitor participation data and feedback from applicants, with a view to strengthening the policy when required. For example, opportunities may arise to enhance intersectional monitoring or support for specific groups as programme delivery evolves.

Mitigation

Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

There is no need to amend the policy or introduce an alternative. The Artist in Residency Programme follows the Pilot Artist in Residence Programme, which is due for completion March 2026. The pilot ARP will be evaluated internally, with the aim of improving all outcome and equality of opportunity, fostering good relations across all Section 75 categories.

While no changes are required at this time, ACNI will continue to monitor participation data and feedback to identify any opportunities for further strengthening the policy's reach and impact.

Timetable and prioritising

Not applicable – policy will not be screened in for EQIA

Part 4: Monitoring

Although a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland is evaluating this programme to assess its impact. Participation will continue to be monitored across Section 75 categories where data are available, including religion, political opinion, race, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and dependants: data provided by each participating Local Authority Council.

Upon completion of each Artist in Residence Programme, ACNI will assess the programme evaluation data, as completed by each participating Local Authority Council, this data will inform ongoing review of the programme's accessibility and impact.

This monitoring will support continuous improvement and help identify any barriers or emerging inequalities that may require action in future programme cycles.

Part 5 – Approval and authorisation

Screened by: Elaine McEnarney

Position/Job title: Research & Policy Officer

Date: 30/3/2026

Approved by: Javier Stanziola

Position/Job title: Director of Strategic Development and Partnerships

Date: 31/3/2026

References

² [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Working and Living Conditions of Artists in Northern Ireland](#)

³ [Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most' | The Northern Ireland Executive](#)