



Fellowship Programme

for political, business and civic leaders
in Northern Ireland

Supporting the Peace Process | Strengthening Democracy |
Navigating Through Complexity



CENTRE FOR DEMOCRACY
AND PEACE BUILDING



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An opportunity to reimagine leadership

Since 1998, the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement has provided a template for political progress in Northern Ireland. Yet, governance arrangements in Northern Ireland continue to be fragile and the legacy of the Troubles remains divisive. Globalisation, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK's exit from the EU, and the cost-of-living crisis have simultaneously introduced additional complexities that require non-traditional skills for political, business, and civic leaders to navigate.

Leaders are being scrutinised more than ever as their character and competency are consistently called into question from various corners of society. According to research from Jon Stokes and Sue Dopson at the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, trust in leadership is at an all-time low and leaders must prove themselves to gain respect. The complex decision-making skills that leaders need to prevent higher levels of distrust, fear, and conflict, are more critical than ever.

Since 2021, the Fellowship Programme has provided the opportunity to reimagine complex political, business, and civic leadership in Northern Ireland through innovation and capacity building to address the challenges of today for the prosperity of tomorrow.





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The Fellowship Programme

There has never been a more critical time for leadership that focuses on the collective and does not withhold knowledge, instead choosing to empower communities and sectors by encouraging information sharing.

The Fellowship Programme is an independent and non-partisan executive programme for twenty-four ambitious leaders from across the political spectrum, business, and civic society in Northern Ireland. It seeks to support the peace process, foster innovation and capacity building, and encourage collaborative decision-making so that leaders across society are strengthened and equipped to navigate through complexity and deliver real change for the benefit of all.

The Fellowship Programme is delivered by the Centre for Democracy and Peace Building (CDPB), working with key stakeholders, policy makers and facilitators from leading academic institutions, including the University of Oxford, with support from its advisory board.

Programme outcomes



Gain knowledge and skills

from leading academics and practitioners to increase your confidence and ability to address political, economic, and social challenges facing Northern Ireland.



Communicate effectively

within your own organisation and across different sectors.



Develop relationships

and join a unique network of over seventy leaders from across political, business, and civic society sectors.



Improve your ability to deliver outcomes

that matter to the people you serve, produce better outcomes, advance the public interest and build a culture of integrity in your organisation and sector.



Receive continued professional development certification

through The CPD Certification Service.





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Supported by

This programme would not be possible without the generous support from
our public and private sponsors and partners.

Many thanks to

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Allstate NI

Irish American Partnership

Camlin Group

FinTrU

Fujitsu NI

NIE Networks

Ulster Carpets



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs



**IRISH AMERICAN
PARTNERSHIP**



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Northern Ireland



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LOCAL TALENT GLOBAL STAGE

FUJITSU

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Fellowship Programme advisory board

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Managing Director,
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Managing Director, NIE Networks

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Programme
Manager

Irka Laskowska

Website and
Design



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The Oxford experience

Participants will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the history of Oxford, the oldest university in the English-speaking world. Here in the 'city of dreaming spires', Fellows will enter an oasis of learning, where the world's greatest leaders and thinkers have studied for over nine hundred years and where research breakthroughs continue to be made today.



The Dublin experience

In Dublin, the UNESCO City of Literature, home to many acclaimed literary pioneers, participants will have the opportunity to work with pioneers in their own fields of politics and business as well as policy development, international relations, and diplomacy. The residential will be developed in partnership with the Royal Irish Academy and colleagues from the Department of Foreign Affairs.





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The Good Friday Agreement Online Course

As part of the Fellowship Programme, Fellows will receive free access to CDPB's Good Friday Agreement Online Course (RRP £199). The interactive course, which is CPD certified (16 hours), introduces you to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement: its historical context; the negotiation process from which it emerged; its architecture and content; and the analysis of its implementation.



The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement

ONLINE COURSE

gfa.democracyandpeace.org

**SIGN UP
TODAY**





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Programme schedule 2024 - 2025

Date / Time	Location / Venue	Speakers / Theme
Tue, 3 Sept Full day	Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings, Stormont	Programme Launch
10 - 13 Sept Residential	Harris Manchester College, Oxford	Leadership and Complexity Building Better Systems + Design Thinking
Thurs, 10 Oct Full day	Belfast	Climate and Energy
Thurs, 7 Nov Full day	Belfast	Governance and Policy Design
Wed, 27 Nov Evening	Belfast	Annual Alumni Reception
Dec / Jan	Online + in person	Mentoring / Individual Meetings
21 - 23 Jan 2025 Residential	Dublin	Economy, Skills, and Education
Thurs, 20 Feb 2025	Belfast	Entrepreneurial Leadership Presentations of Group Projects
Thurs, 20 Mar 2025	Hillsborough Castle	Graduation





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Design Thinking

Throughout the programme, Fellows will undertake a Design Thinking project. During the Oxford residential, Fellows will spend a day learning about Design Thinking from industry experts, where they will be divided into groups (based on a diversity of sectors) to identify a societal challenge and then seek to begin to address that challenge.

Hence, the Design Thinking project harnesses the eco-leadership framework underpinning the Fellowship Programme. This activity will have dedicated time during various programme sessions including the Dublin residential, and Fellows will also work in their groups outside of the programme.





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Design Thinking in action

Nuala Toman, Head of Policy, Communications, Information, and Advocacy at Disability Action, Class of 2023

The persistent cost-of-living emergency, political impasse, and public finance crisis were the backdrop to my group's work. Together as a group of cross-sectoral leaders, we considered how the current societal context would impact upon disabled people and disabled person's organisations. The process identified that while funding and investment were important, disabled people wanted credible employment opportunities and ways to develop entrepreneurship. From this the seeds of the Empower programme were planted. Empower is a £4.6mn programme funded by the UK government and will support two thousand disabled, autistic, and/or neurodivergent people to secure careers across all sectors and all levels of careers.



Ciarán Fox, Director of the Royal Society of Ulster Architects and Chair of Climate NI, Class of 2024

The Design Thinking project has allowed me to collaborate with other Fellows on how to deliver tangible benefits of climate action in a deprived community in Belfast. In my day-job as Director of the Royal Society of Ulster Architects, I had been developing a net-zero neighbourhood ideas competition for early career architects. As a result of the collaboration with other Fellows, this competition is now due to be substantially enhanced. For example, on the advice of Fellow Róisín Wood, Chief Executive of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI), I am currently applying for a CFNI grant. If successful, this would enable us to present the best three ideas from the competition to the local community for a public vote. The funding, if successful, will also give the winning design team the opportunity to engage in more detail with the community to develop a costed proposal for action that would reduce household bills, improve health, and reduce emissions.





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Alumni network

Entering its fourth year, the Fellowship Programme's alumni network comprises over seventy leaders from across various sectors in Northern Ireland. In the realm of politics, alumni include one MP, nine MLAs, and seven local councillors. Of those MLAs, one is a minister in the NI Executive (Finance), two are committee chairs, and four are deputy committee chairs. The network contains several senior civil servants including Comptroller and Auditor General, Chief of Staff of the NI Fiscal Council, and Principal Officer in the Department of Health. Moreover, there are several senior members of businesses and charities (including CEOs) who make up the alumni network.

Fellows of the 2024/25 cohort will join this extensive and unique network and have countless opportunities to engage and develop relationships as well as attend alumni-only seminar and events.

What do our alumni say?



Jason Bunting, Parliamentary Assistant for Sinéad McLaughlin MLA, Class of 2024

The Fellowship Programme has had a profound impact on my personal ambitions. After attending the Oxford residential in September, I made the decision to apply for the Master of Public Policy. Six months later, I accepted the offer with the assistance of a full scholarship. This would not have been possible without the help of the Fellowship Programme, and I am profoundly grateful.

Cllr Aaron Callan, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Class of 2021

We were afforded access to key thinkers and leaders who offer a real insight into what leadership means and how we look at the world. Furthermore, the development of relationships with the Fellows on the programme was vital. I would recommend anyone who is in a management role to apply for the programme.



Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland, Class of 2024

The Fellowship Programme offers the unique opportunity to build long lasting and important networks across political, civic, and business leaders in Northern Ireland, whilst also gaining insight and knowledge from many world leading experts. The structure of the programme recognises the importance of leaders taking time away to focus on developing their leadership skills further and focusing on shared priorities for Northern Ireland.

Pádraig Delargy, MLA for Foyle, Class of 2023

One of the things I find particularly beneficial is being able to work with people who have vast amounts of experience and people who are quite new to their field. So, you get both breadth and diversity.





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What do our alumni say?



Deborah Erskine, MLA for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, Class of 2024

The Fellowship Programme gives political, business, and civic leaders from across Northern Ireland the opportunity to learn from each other and share experiences, which are away from the normal day to day interactions. It is a perfect opportunity to grow and develop leadership qualities, as well as challenging thought, ideas, and how we can collectively work for the betterment of Northern Ireland.

Cllr Joy Ferguson, Armagh, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Class of 2023

The Fellowship positively questioned the contribution we can make to political, civic, and business life in Northern Ireland. It equipped me with the skills and confidence to know that the power to change comes from people willing to step outside their comfort zone. It was a wonderful opportunity to nurture discussion on complex issues in a safe space, to network and meet different people from all walks of life. For me it was a journey of discovery and contributed to my decision to enter political life and stand for election in my local area.



Charmain Jones, Women Spaces Co Ordinator at the Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network, Class of 2023

The Fellowship programme meant so much to me as a community peacebuilder. It not only helped me learn and self-reflect in both a personal and professional capacity, but it also helped me build networks and links with those working in the business, civic, and political sectors. Now a year later, I am proud to be part of the Fellowship Programme alumni network and I still have sustained positive relationships with all of those who were Fellows in 2023.

Don McCann, Investment Partner (Northern Ireland) for the Office for Investment, Class of 2023

I had a fantastic experience that took my thinking to places I didn't expect. My cohort were superb, and we remain in regular contact. The learning was both excellent and varied, and we were supported throughout, particular by fantastic partner organisations. The learning opportunities continue through the alumni network, and I would recommend the Fellowship Programme to anyone.



Nuala Murphy, Diversity and inclusion specialist, Class of 2023

The journey with the Fellowship Programme provided me with the courage to enter a period of reflection, taking the time to become curious about where I could have more impact directly on people's lives and connect all my experiences, networks, drive, and passion to make Northern Ireland a fairer place for people to live, work, and thrive.

Gina Savage, Principle, Abbey Christian Brothers' Grammar School, Class of 2023

The Fellowship Programme was crucial to developing me as an individual and as a leader. There are many stand out moments that contributed to my growth and leadership development. However, it is the co-design session at the Oxford residential and the subsequent group project that opened my eyes to the potential not only within my diverse project group, but within myself and gave me the confidence to believe in myself, resulting in my decision to apply to lead my own school. By the time of graduation, I'd just been appointed as the first female principal of an all boy 900+ school.





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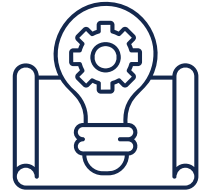
Programme outline



24 public leaders
political, business, public
sector and civic society



Duration: 7 months
September – March



**Undertake a Design
Thinking project**



Symposium days
in Belfast



Residentials
in Oxford and Dublin



Graduation
at Hillsborough
Castle



**Time for self-reflection
and self-development**



**Access to the
Good Friday Agreement
Online Course**



CPD certified



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How to apply

The Fellowship Programme is designed for leaders from political, business, public sector and civic society backgrounds working in Northern Ireland.

To apply, please complete the application form at fellowship.democracyandpeace.org by **19 June 2024**. You will be asked to upload your CV and two short essays.

Please submit an up-to-date resumé or CV (maximum 2 pages A4 PDF). You will also be required to submit two essays in PDF format (up to 250 words each excluding footnotes). The two questions are the following:

Please describe what you believe is the most strategic challenge facing Northern Ireland in the next decade?

By outlining both your immediate and long term career goals, how will the Fellowship Programme help you achieve those goals?

Fees

The programme registration fee is **£1500**. This includes accommodation in Oxford and Dublin, meals during the residentials, programme materials, and access to the Good Friday Agreement Online Course.

You will need to cover the cost of travel to/from Oxford and Dublin.

Scholarships and financial support are available on request by application.

Contact us

For more information on the Fellowship Programme, please visit



fellowship.democracyandpeace.org



fellowship@democracyandpeace.org



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