



### The benefits and challenges associated with expressions of cultural identity

#### What is Cultural Identity?

As an individual your identity is all about who you are as a person. There are many different elements that come together to create our identity. These include:

- age;
- gender;
- ethnic origin;
- religious beliefs;
- political beliefs.

There are many things around us that can influence (have an impact on) our identity and these include:

- family;
- friends;
- community;
- church;
- political leaders.

Our cultural identity is about belonging to a social group and about shared practices and traditions. We can express (show) our cultural identity through:

- food and drink;
- sport;
- language;
- religious beliefs and practice;
- festivals and parades;
- music;
- clothing;
- political beliefs.

We live in a diverse society and Northern Ireland is populated with a range of cultural identities. The two main cultural identities in Northern Ireland are still widely recognised as Catholic / Nationalist and Protestant / Unionist. Can you think of other cultural identities in our society?

#### Benefits associated with expressions of cultural identity

There are many benefits associated with expressions of cultural identity. These include:

- a sense of belonging;
- learn tolerance;
- shared experiences – try new cultural traditions, e.g. food, language and music;
- become more open minded;
- become a multicultural society;
- learn mutual understanding;
- build trust between communities;
- promote respect.

#### Challenges associated with expressions of cultural identity

Unfortunately, expressions of cultural identity can sometimes bring challenges. These include:

- stereotyping;
- prejudice;
- sectarianism;
- racism;
- discrimination.

## Positive contribution of ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland

The population in Northern Ireland is changing. Our community consists of Polish; Chinese; Filipino; Lithuanian; Romanian immigrants for example. This enriches our community and provides opportunities to become a multicultural, tolerant society.

## Benefits – Immigration

- Promotes tolerance and understanding with communities from different cultures.
- Enriches our community by sharing experiences with different people.
- Generates more money in our economy through businesses.
- Increases tax contributions which can pay for Education, Health and Improvements in Northern Ireland.
- Eases skills shortages – doctors and nurses come here to work in our hospitals.

## Challenges – Immigration

- An increase in racism and community tensions.
- The existence of prejudice and stereotyping.
- An increase in discrimination.
- Pressure on resources and services like housing; hospital waiting lists; language barriers.

