



**THE ATLANTIC PHILANTHROPIES
IN NORTHERN IRELAND
(1991-2014)**

The
ATLANTIC
Philanthropies

July 2015

The Atlantic Philanthropies in Northern Ireland

An Overview in Numbers

Total Investment (1991-2014)

\$554 million

Grant Count

578

Average Grant Amount

\$957,804

Top 3 Grantees

- | | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------|
| 1. Queen's University of Belfast Foundation | \$131.7 million | 71 grants |
| 2. University of Ulster Foundation | \$62.6 million | 47 grants |
| 3. Community Foundation for Northern Ireland | \$30.1 million | 21 grants |

First Grant

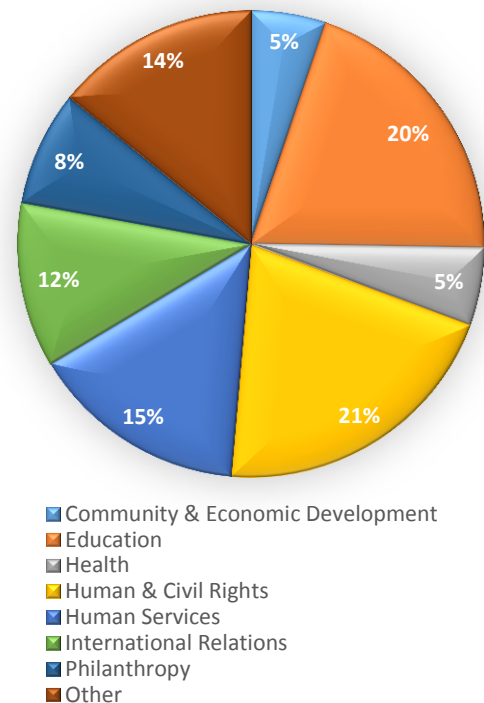
\$9,631 to Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (1991)

Capital Grants

\$166.4 million 53 grants

Historic and Current Programme Areas	Grants	Total USD (millions)
Reconciliation & Human Rights	230	\$154.3
Higher Education	62	\$137.8
Children & Youth	76	\$91.3
Ageing	72	\$75.0
Other		\$26.7
Founding Chairman	2	\$24.4
Nonprofit Sector/ Voluntarism/ Philanthropy	46	\$19.6
Evaluation	20	\$8.8
Pre-Collegiate Education and Teacher Development	21	\$7.9
Community Development and Civic Engagement	22	\$7.8
Total	578	\$553.6

NI Grants - Key Themes*



*Based on preliminary analysis of grants data. Subject to change.

The Atlantic Philanthropies in Northern Ireland (1991-2014)

Key Grantee Achievements

- \$220 million leveraged, in addition to Atlantic and government investments of \$150 million, for research excellence and university infrastructure
- Programmes of shared services developed at hostile “interface” communities, improving delivery of issues such as early years and parenting, cyber bullying, and youth engagement for many individuals and families.
- Nearly double the number of integrated schools and pre-schools (49 to 90) and triple the number of students (7,000 to 21,000) being educated in integrated schools
- By 2013, 20% of all Northern Ireland schools (13,000 pupils) participated in regular weekly shared education from virtually a zero base in 2006
- Shared education model replicated in deeply divide societies: Macedonia and Israel-Palestine
- Extensive new case law established clarifying and extending the rights of disadvantaged groups. For example, securing judgements which extended the rights of the wrongly accused, or ensured that hospital patients with learning disabilities are regularly assessed to see if they would be better suited to community-based care
- Enabled local communities to use international human rights standards to improve their local public services. For example, getting all of the families with young children re-housed from high rise tower blocks in North Belfast
- Nearly 500 cases of punishment beatings and shootings prevented in Belfast and Derry, and paramilitary beatings and shootings eradicated in seven of nine pilot areas
- Creation of Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament in 2011 has enabled more than 500 older people annually to represent their interests to government and policymakers
- \$20 million from government to provide 80,000 older people with winter relief payments through the “Can’t Heat or Eat” campaign
- Over 26,000 people collected social security benefits, totalling \$93 million, between 2007 and 2012 through the Access to Benefits project
- Nearly a 19-times return on investment of benefits for older people, including housing, health and care, and community services
- Grantees supported the development of the 2011 Dementia Strategy highlighting the importance of making best-practice dementia care the norm from diagnosis to end of life, and sustaining a supportive environment
- 33,000 children and their families receive high-quality, evidence-based early years care and education services; and rollout of the Early Years model in other countries, including Serbia, Palestine and Colombia
- A sophisticated data tracking and measurement system to identify gaps in children’s services and improve interagency cooperation and coordination between government and service providers.

Context and Environment

Political tension, violence and inequality were constants in Northern Ireland since the state's inception in 1921, varying only in intensity. From 1969 to 1998, Northern Ireland experienced an unprecedented period of sustained political conflict and violence, known as The Troubles. By the mid-1990s, the conflict had claimed more than 3,500 lives from a population of just over 1.6 million people (more than 2 per cent).

Recent estimates by the Victims Commission suggest that 500,000 people in Northern Ireland (31 per cent) were directly affected by loss of a loved one, physical injury or trauma.

The paramilitary ceasefires of 1994 marked a critical turning point and showed willingness amongst protagonists to put aside violence and work toward peace. The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement of April 1998 heralded a new beginning for Northern Ireland and resulted in the establishment of new institutions involving unionist and nationalist politicians.

Throughout its two and a half decades of grantmaking in Northern Ireland, The Atlantic Philanthropies sought to address the legacy of violent conflict which prevented movement towards reconciliation, stability and the protection of human rights.

The Early Days (1990-2003): Building a Fragile Peace and Supporting Universities

Personal Peace-Building

Virtually all of Atlantic's work in Northern Ireland can be traced back to Chuck Feeney's overarching desire to help build a lasting, sustainable peace and to reconcile deeply divided communities. Mr. Feeney's distress with the violence in Northern Ireland became particularly acute on 8 November 1987, when an IRA bomb placed at a British war memorial killed 11 people attending a remembrance service in the town of Enniskillen, close to his ancestral home. As described in Conor O'Clery's book *The Billionaire Who Wasn't*, Mr. Feeney saw the gruesome aftermath on television while in London.

"He thought, 'This is madness, it has to stop,'" Mr. O'Clery wrote. Consistent with what would become his and Atlantic's expressed philosophy of Giving While Living, Mr. Feeney's daughter Leslie remembers him saying that he wanted to see peace, in his lifetime, in Northern Ireland.

According to his biography, Mr. Feeney, along with fellow Irish-American leaders, worked behind the scenes to create an opening for peace-building and “a secret back channel of communication was established linking Gerry Adams¹ and President Clinton...As a result, the administration gave Adams a 48-hour visa waiver in January 1994 to attend a Northern Ireland peace conference in New York.” Following announcement of a “complete cessation of military operations” on 31 August 1994, “Feeney negotiated directly with Sinn Féin officials on the funding for an office in Washington to promote a political alternative....said Feeney years later, ‘It was the right thing to do. It proved you can bring people around to your thinking.’...Feeney emphasised it was an ‘absolutely personal’ donation of his own funds... Feeney’s initiative was applauded by the Clinton White House,” wrote O’Clery.

Atlantic’s Early Peace-Building Work

Starting in 1991, Atlantic began making grants in Northern Ireland, for the first five years from its Dublin office. At a time of intense and continuing political violence, funding opportunities were limited. Atlantic supported cross-community and cross-border contact and dialogue aimed at broadening political debate. A 2002 Deloitte evaluation of Atlantic’s earliest reconciliation work noted that the dialogue projects “tended to be between individuals naturally disposed to inter-community engagement (preaching to the converted) and largely focused within middle class communities. Early interventions were low risk, affected limited change and failed to draw participants from hard line communities.”

“In the late 90s during the peace talks, it was a turning point in Northern Ireland. There was a window opened to put issues on the table that had been buried. That’s where The Atlantic Philanthropies came into its own. It was that so many people were looking at the governance and constitutional issues, all of which were important. But to build peace you also need to have those sustainable parts of the agreement, which are around the social and economic parts as well as the human rights and equality and Atlantic had been funding this, some of which was regarded as risky. Nobody else was funding this work.” -

Monica McWilliams, former leader of the Women’s Coalition

In October 1995, after most paramilitary organisations had made initial ceasefire declarations, Atlantic established its Belfast office. As new support emerged for peace and reconciliation, including funding from the European Union, Mr. Feeney and Atlantic staff considered what value they could add. For Atlantic, which was still

¹ Gerry Adams is an Irish republican politician and president of the Sinn Féin political party since 1983 and was banned from travel in Britain and the U.S. during The Troubles.

operating in anonymity, that value was to support some of the most marginalised groups in Northern Ireland – something other funders were unwilling or unlikely to do.

In the next few years, which included the signing of the historic Belfast Good Friday Agreement of 1998², much of Atlantic's work focused on the most conflict-ridden communities of Northern Ireland, including engaging those most marginalised, supporting leaders to take risks for peace, and securing reform in areas such as policing, criminal justice and dealing with the past.

Key accomplishments included:

- *Engaging the Marginalised and Ex-Combatants in Building the Peace.* Between 1998 and 2003, Atlantic directed \$30 million toward promoting reconciliation among the disaffected groups most deeply involved in conflict by engaging the leaders of Republican and Unionist neighbourhoods. This strategy was similar to Atlantic's support, during the same period, of peace-building and reconciliation in South Africa by promoting dialogue among ex-combatants in the anti-apartheid struggle there. The 2002 Deloitte evaluation noted that "support for crisis intervention work within loyalist communities in North Belfast... which involved engaging with local paramilitary leaders, has been credited with reducing the level of street violence."

Atlantic also supported politically motivated ex-prisoners who wanted to work for peace. These highly controversial grants, totalling more than \$8.1 million between 1997 and 2004, grew ex-prisoner support organisations on both sides of the sectarian divide. Atlantic's theory of change was that in those most conflict-ridden communities, ex-prisoners enjoyed an elevated social status that made them crucial to the political and social direction of those communities.

"We got interested in people in prison for politically motivated crimes—in their potential," said John R. Healy, former president and chief executive of Atlantic. "Once they were released and wanted to take the path of peace, we funded a lot of them. They were people of influence in their communities. If they did not commit to supporting the peace process once they got out of prison, a very fragile peace might not hold."

² The 1998 Belfast Good Friday Agreement provided a framework to end the 30-year conflict known as The Troubles. It established a political system for power sharing among the parties in the conflict and was ground-breaking in that access to human rights and equality was the foundation on which a new society was to be built.

- ***Supporting Restorative Justice.*** During the conflict, paramilitaries in sectarian enclaves enforced extra-legal civil order that included “punishment beatings and shootings” and expelling people from their communities. Atlantic supported groups in Catholic and Protestant communities that provided voluntary alternatives to this informal, often violent system through community restorative justice, in which offenders acknowledged their crime, made restitution to their victims and participated in a programme of rehabilitation to prevent future violations. This was prior to devolution and the British government strongly opposed this approach, as it felt it could undermine the police and justice system and even perhaps strengthen the role of informal justice.



Shankill Alternatives AGM, 2013 (Courtesy of NI Alternatives)

As Debbie Watters, assistant director of Northern Ireland Alternatives, one of the community groups Atlantic funded, noted: “The interaction with the paramilitaries wasn’t the difficult part because, when you live in communities like these, paramilitaries aren’t people who parachute in from Mars; they belong to the community. They are part of us. The difficult part was the statutory and government agencies accepting that we had to fulfil that role. In our first year, the Northern Ireland Office placed an embargo on us, and they starved us of funding and they said that we would wither on the vine, so we really were perceived as being a huge threat to the system and to the criminal justice system. It was Atlantic Philanthropies that became our saviour.”

Pilot projects in nine of the most conflict-affected communities in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry were supported and evaluations found that they prevented

violence in between 70 and 80 per cent of cases. Nearly 500 cases that would have ended in beatings, shootings and/or exclusions were resolved peacefully. In seven out of nine sites, paramilitary beatings and shootings were reduced to zero. Most significant, from a longer-term perspective, evaluators found that the experience had influenced paramilitary leaders' thinking about organising and community leadership in a post-conflict Northern Ireland. Ultimately, with Atlantic brokering the relationships, the restorative justice organisations convinced the government to fund them.



Culture Night Belfast, 2011 (Courtesy of Committee on the Administration of Justice)

Spurring Economic Growth through Higher Education

In addition to peace-building and reconciliation, Atlantic focused its efforts during this period, as it did in its other jurisdictions, on strengthening third level education. Initially, Atlantic supported proposals that improved the general quality of the two local universities—Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and University of Ulster—such as libraries, academic buildings, student accommodation, fundraising capacity and access for disadvantaged students. From 2001, this switched to a focused effort to improve their research capacity. Modelled after the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLTI) in the Republic of Ireland, Atlantic partnered with the Northern Ireland government to create the Support Programme for University Research (SPUR) initiative. SPUR's goal was to strengthen the universities' competitiveness and capacity for groundbreaking research. Between 2001 and 2008, Atlantic and the government jointly provided \$152.8 million to 13 projects in the two institutions. SPUR proposals were assessed by panels of international experts and only the best were funded.



Queen's University Belfast, Queen's Library, 2014 (Credit: D. Wylie)

"Our schools had been at a competitive disadvantage because of The Troubles here and the difficulty of attracting staff," said Richard Barnett, vice-chancellor of the University of Ulster. "SPUR literally changed our ability to do quality research."

An evaluation of SPUR noted sustained improvements in strategic planning, increased leverage of an additional \$227 million and a rise in the externally adjudicated UK-wide research ranking system. New research centres included the Centre for Molecular Biosciences at the University of Ulster (now the top-rated centre of its type in the UK and internationally) and the Centre for Cancer Research & Cell Biology (CCRCB) at QUB (a treatment and research facility of excellence with the best cancer outcomes in the UK and among the best in Europe).

Discoveries are taking place "that we wouldn't have dreamed of 12 years ago," said Professor Patrick Johnston, current QUB president and vice-chancellor, first director of the CCRCB and renowned cancer specialist.

Later Years (2003-2014): Cementing the Peace

In 2003, the Board of Atlantic adopted four global programme areas, three of which were implemented in Northern Ireland: *Ageing, Children & Youth*, and *Reconciliation & Human Rights*. The movement to global programmes coincided with decisions taken to end the foundation's anonymity and commit to a limited life. "Cementing the peace" was the overarching frame and driver for Atlantic's work in Northern Ireland. Staff believed that in a place where discrimination, inequality and prejudice were prominent features, building a society where people were treated fairly and equitably was a key requirement for lasting stability and peace. As with its grantmaking in the Republic of Ireland, in Northern Ireland Atlantic sought to:

- Ensure quality services for those most in need
- Bring evidence to bear on policy and practice
- Strengthen the voices of the most marginalised communities.

Reconciliation & Human Rights

The Reconciliation & Human Rights work continued and expanded the peace-building initiatives of the earlier period. The Reconciliation strand funded a range of interventions to support and strengthen the peace, including consolidating peace-building at hostile interfaces and increasing opportunities for shared and integrated education. The Human Rights strand, meanwhile, built on the vision for a post-conflict society as laid out in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement by advancing policy and the law and by strengthening nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) to hold government to account. Key accomplishments included:

Providing Shared and Quality Services in Conflict Areas

In rebuilding a new society from one that decades of violence had torn apart, Atlantic-supported organisations worked across sectarian divides to ensure that all residents received the services that they needed and to which they were entitled. At the places where Catholic and Protestant communities bordered one another, there was continuing conflict and a legacy of suspicion and fear. Since the early 1990s, Atlantic had funded interventions in such communities aimed at stabilising them and supporting their emerging community leadership.

"We decided to work together literally on the interfaces to see what we could achieve," said Liam Maskey, co-founder of Intercomm, an intervention in Belfast. "Nothing grand. Literally, could we reduce conflicts and killings at the interfaces? People realised that they weren't being asked to give up their political aspirations."

They were being asked to enhance their community while assisting what was seen at the time as their opposites. What we have done is make this place a better place. We've made it into a place where people don't believe that they have to kill to get their political point over."

Atlantic's support now intensified and stressed working together to secure essential public services that people on both sides of the religious divide needed. Early investments in conflict-affected neighbourhoods in West and North Belfast led to collaborative partnership with government. A \$6.5 million co-investment fund enabled six more "interface" communities to develop programmes of shared services. Formerly opposing groups collaborated on common issues such as early years and parenting, cyber bullying, youth engagement and support for vulnerable families. Participants developed communications and advocacy skills that empowered them to challenge poor public services, lack of public funding and the negative influence of paramilitaries. This work influenced the government's Together: Building a United Community Strategy in 2013. It notes that the joint government/Atlantic work "...offers a very helpful model of change that could potentially inform future interventions involving interface areas..."

Promoting Integrated and Shared Education

In Northern Ireland, Catholic and Protestant children often do not meet and interact until they are adults, in university or at work. Typically, schools are almost entirely composed of students, teachers and staff from one religious background. Such segregated schooling perpetuates suspicion and mistrust of the "other," fuels prejudice and hinders communities working together to build a better future. However, the prospect of unsegregated schooling still presents many parents with concerns that their own community identity and culture will be lost or diminished.

Atlantic's theory of change was that peace would not be fully realised if children and schools remained divided and unconnected. From the early 1990s, it had funded the Integrated Education Fund (IEF), a parent-led organisation that supported bringing children and staff from all and no faith backgrounds together in integrated schools. Between 1996 and 2010, Atlantic made grants totalling \$13.8 million to the IEF, which allowed the rapid development of integrated schools. Pupil numbers tripled from the time of Atlantic's first investment to 21,000 (6.5 per cent of the school population) and the number of integrated schools and pre-school facilities rose from 49 to 90. Now the government provides more than \$80 million of core funding for integrated education each year.

Despite this growth, segregated housing and continuing support for single-identity education limited the reach of integrated schools. This prompted Atlantic and the International Fund for Ireland to support a complementary alternative—shared education—which would enable sustained and meaningful collaboration for the over 90 per cent of children in religiously segregated schools.

Shared education involves schools collaborating to provide both academic and reconciliation benefits to students, their families and broader communities. Atlantic invested \$17 million in shared education from 2007 to 2013, by which time 20 per cent of all schools, involving 13,000 pupils, participated in shared education on a weekly basis. This effort involved significant initial risk on the part of communities and their schools that had been at the centre of nearly four decades of conflict.



The Centre for Shared Education at Queen's University Belfast, 2012 (Credit: Lorcan Doherty)

Lauri McCusker, who oversees a shared education initiative as the director of the Fermanagh Trust, has seen the difference that shared education can make in his community. “What shared education has done is it's brought schools, school communities, kids, educators, principals, and the governance of the schools together and relationships have built, friendships have been entered into, and so people get to know one another and start to share things, not only during the school day, but outside the school day, so it's really transformative.”

With evaluations showing positive outcomes for students, parents and teachers, the Northern Ireland Executive has committed to mainstreaming this approach (see Page 22 for details). Researchers at the Atlantic-funded Centre for Shared Education at QUB are also developing a programme for shared education in Macedonia, Israel/Palestine, Mexico and the United States.

Creating a Stronger Human Rights Infrastructure

The Good Friday Agreement provided a framework to end The Troubles and create lasting peace. The Agreement was groundbreaking on several fronts, not least of which was that human rights and justice were central to it. However, it was dependent upon a new power-sharing model of devolved government, which was had its flaws. Deal brokering behind closed doors often led to short-term, partisan horse-trading which undermined the universality of the Agreement and had the potential to ultimately derail it. This is the space in which Atlantic's human rights grantees operated – providing that independent challenge function to hold the new government accountable to its prior commitments, making sure that peace had a real and positive impact on the day-to-day lives of *everyone* in Northern Ireland, and thereby keeping the Agreement “on the rails.” As Professor Christine Bell from the University of Edinburgh noted, the “on-going monitoring of both the human rights situation and the response of new institutions...is detailed and important work that is vital to all other work. It is not new and often does not appear exciting. However, it is the bedrock of any strategic intervention.”

Grantees' accomplishments included:

- ***Monitoring human rights.*** With Atlantic funding, NGOs have been able to conduct rigorous research and publish findings to regularly challenge government, advocating and identifying many practical ways in which Northern Ireland's government can better fulfil the commitments specified in the Agreement. This work has changed political debate by demonstrating that political and policy decisions should be based on objective need, reliable evidence and data rather than assumption-based anecdote or community bias.
- ***Creating change through public interest litigation.*** Prior to Atlantic's investments, there had been little litigation of this type. Grantees established a culture of *pro bono* legal services in which lawyers donated their time. Successful cases have resulted in improved rights for people with learning disabilities and the exoneration of wrongly convicted prisoners, creating sustainable new case law that cements rights for groups of marginalised people across Northern Ireland and beyond.

- *Securing changes in social housing.* The Participation and Practice of Rights Project's campaign in North Belfast has established new, meaningful consultative mechanisms between the NI Housing Executive and its tenants, enabling them to highlight egregious shortfalls in housing standards and to work constructively to address them. For example, the Housing Executive re-housed all families with young children from the seven high-rise blocks in the New Lodge into more suitable accommodation, and replaced the sewage systems in all seven blocks. Since then the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees has publically recognised the work of the "Seven Towers Residents Group" as representing best practice in using international human rights standards to make local change.

Ageing

The launch of the Ageing Programme in 2004 created a new focus for Atlantic in Northern Ireland, where the proportion of the population age 65-plus was expected to double from 13.5 per cent to 27 per cent by 2035—the oldest population profile in Atlantic's global Ageing Programme. Staff determined, based on scoping in 2003-2004, that gains could be made by strengthening NGOs and research infrastructure and mobilising older people to advocate on their own behalf, putting ageing issues on the political agenda for the first time. Ultimately, Atlantic invested \$72 million between 2003 and 2014 to strengthen the voice of older people, develop the ageing sector, create new service models, partner with government and place dementia at the heart of the policy agenda. Notable accomplishments included:

Creating a Stronger Ageing Sector

Atlantic's investments helped create a more effective, efficient and professional age sector that identifies and campaigns for policies that support healthy ageing and that pushes government to act. Northern Ireland now has a strong and articulate lobby of older people.

"Prior to Atlantic's funding, Age Sector Platform existed in a previous guise but it was totally volunteer-led," said Eddie Lynch, chief executive of Age Sector Platform. "Older people from across Northern Ireland felt that they needed to have a stronger voice on a range of issues. But the organisation struggled without resources in place and it was difficult to have the impact they needed to make progress on the big issues of concern for older people."

With Atlantic funding, Age Sector Platform helped make the voices of seniors heard, through the creation of the Northern Ireland Pensioners' Parliament in 2011. Each year Age Sector Platform (ASP) members elect around 500 representatives from across the

community to participate in a two-day regional parliament, debating motions for change with government and policymakers and defining older people's campaign issues for the year ahead. ASP members bring resolutions to special sittings of the NI Assembly and meetings with Members of Parliament in the House of Commons. It has had some notable successes, including the "Can't Heat or Eat" campaign that led to a government payment of \$20 million to support fuel costs of 80,000 older people with insufficient income to both eat and heat their homes. It was also influential in the establishment of a Commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland and securing government commitments to address safety and crime issues for older people.



Age Sector Platform, 2009 (Credit: Audra Melton)

"The Pensioners' Parliament is a brilliant idea," said Edith Shaw, a recent pensioner and participant. "I attended the Belfast Parliament and was very impressed. I think that the more of us who contribute and become involved then our voice will be heard and we will at least have an input and an influence. I think too much of the time government do things *to* us and *for* us instead of doing things *with* us. I hate having things done *to* me. But I'm very much in favour of doing things *with* others."

Providing Services to Alleviate Poverty for Vulnerable Older People

At the beginning of the century, vulnerable older people in Northern Ireland often did not fully access their social security benefits because they did not know their entitlements or were wary of engaging with government on personal finance matters. This was particularly devastating for poorer people who struggled with activities of daily living and meeting their basic needs. Atlantic provided support to NGOs to find and enrol older people in benefit programmes. From 2007 to 2012, the Access to Benefits project helped more than 26,000 people in Northern Ireland collect social security benefits, totalling \$93 million.

With Atlantic's support, the government's Social Security Agency adopted some of these practices, creating the infrastructure for partnership with NGOs that can more effectively reach out to older people in health and care settings, supported housing and other marginalised groups to increase their benefit uptake. Atlantic provided 50 per cent of the \$1.2 million funding to establish an Innovation Fund with the Social Security Agency in 2011. To date every \$1 spent on the fund has resulted in \$18.72 of additional benefit payments that older people would not have claimed otherwise.

Informing Policy and Advocacy Through Ageing Research

Part of the rationale for the Ageing Programme in Northern Ireland was to address limitations in policy advocacy, which lacked a strong evidence base or sophistication in the use of data. A baseline survey by Queen's University Belfast had found that research in ageing in Northern Ireland was poorly funded, of varying quality, and that few academics were conducting research that affected older people's daily lives. To strengthen research in ageing, Atlantic supported initiatives including the Centre for Age Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI), an independent all-island centre to stimulate, coordinate, fund and disseminate research on ageing. CARDI

has filled evidence gaps in critical ageing policy areas like over-use of medication in care facilities, loneliness and isolation, physical activity and poverty bringing together researchers, NGOs and policymakers to shape responses. Atlantic also supported the

“Atlantic shifted a lot of issues from very weak positions to very prominent ones and we see that in ageing around things like the Older People's Commissioner, new legislation, and, new resources coming in to older people. There is a stronger political attention being paid to those types of issues. The main benefit of Atlantic's investments was shaping social, political and policy attitudes and of moving something fairly systemically in a short period of time. - Brendan Murtagh, a lecturer at Queen's University Belfast and evaluator of the Ageing Programme

establishment of the Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study on Ageing (NICOLA), a long-term assessment of how people function over the age of 50. Based at Queen's University Belfast, NICOLA works closely with the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA), also established with Atlantic support in the Republic of Ireland, in seeking better understanding of the lives of older people so that policy, research and resources can be targeted to the greatest needs. Results from the first wave of NICOLA investigations will emerge in 2016 and a second wave of research is underway. In 2013, Atlantic created the joint QUB and University of Ulster ARK Ageing Programme that embeds ageing as a core subject in both universities, and creates a symbiotic and sustained partnership between academics and the ageing sector to ensure advocates receive the evidence they need to create treatments, policies, programmes and laws that improve the lives of older people in Northern Ireland.

Making Dementia a Priority for Ageing Practice and Policy

Dementia affects approximately 19,000 people in Northern Ireland and estimates are that the number will grow to 23,000 people by 2017, but until recent years the issue had received little focused attention. Atlantic began supporting dementia care in 2006, investing some \$6.2 million in early initiatives aiming to strengthen awareness of the disease and to investigate improved practices and treatments. Early Atlantic grantees, Alzheimer's Society and the Dementia Services Development Centre, served on the advisory group that developed the government's 2011 Dementia Strategy. The strategy highlighted the importance of making best-practice dementia care the norm from diagnosis to end of life and creating a supportive environment in which people could live well with dementia, and developed a positive policy environment within which Atlantic could continue to pursue its dementia goals.

In 2012 Atlantic adopted an Ireland-wide objective to improve the care and well-being of people with dementia. Grants of \$4.4 million made under this objective have resulted in significant up-skilling of care providers through the best practice education provided by the Dementia Services Development Centre, creation of community-based models for living well with dementia through Alzheimer's Society's Dementia Friendly Communities programme, an applied care research programme co-funded with the Public Health Agency, and innovation in architecture and design, including the redevelopment of the NI Hospice to better meet the end-of-life care needs of people with dementia.



Hastings Memory Walk, 2008 (Courtesy of Alzheimer's Society)

An underpinning aim throughout has been to ensure that people with dementia continue to have agency in their own lives and that policymakers and service providers hear their voices. In 2007 Atlantic supported the establishment by the Alzheimer's Society of "Let Me Speak, Let Me Be Heard," an advocacy programme that uses paid staff and volunteers to help people with dementia make informed choices about their health and care needs. Alzheimer's Society has sustained the programme and set up Advocacy Network Northern Ireland, which developed advocacy standards adopted by state health and social care agencies. In 2014 Atlantic supported a group of people with dementia to set up an advocacy organisation – Dementia NI – that is becoming active in the national/international network of dementia empowerment groups, and will lead campaigns to create better quality services and support, improved public awareness, reduced stigma and better quality of life for people with dementia.

Atlantic's dementia grantmaking culminated in 2014 in a \$9.3 million partnership with government that will cement the work of our grantees by embedding good practices in dementia care in Northern Ireland in the years to come (See Page 23 for details).

Children & Youth

The launch of the Children & Youth Programme in 2004 broadened Atlantic's interest in children's issues from the reconciliation focus of its integrated education work to a focus on transforming children's services through a greater use of evidence-informed prevention and early intervention approaches. The key beneficiaries of such a change would be the 37 per cent of Northern Ireland's 398,000 children living in poverty

From 2004 to 2014, Atlantic invested \$55 million to transform the way that children and young adults receive services. At the start of the programme, government and NGOs tended to work with troubled children and young people after their problems had manifested and were entrenched and complex. Neither early intervention nor rigorous, evidence-based evaluation was a priority for government or for service organisations, even though research had shown that intervention from the earliest stages of life could prevent negative consequences later. Atlantic grants supported prevention and early intervention services that were rigorously tested so that service providers and policymakers could understand and apply that knowledge of what worked and what did not in producing better outcomes for children. Staff selected the same programme objective in the Republic of Ireland and supported significant all-island work. The strategy had three broad components, all vital to achieve success:

- **Demonstration:** Demonstrating what prevention and early intervention services looked like and how they could be implemented locally
- **Gathering evidence:** Proving that the outcomes for children using these services were better than (or at least as good as) the current system
- **Advocacy:** Using the emerging evidence to encourage and influence changes in government policies, commissioning decisions and ultimately budget allocations.

Demonstration of Prevention and Early Intervention Services

Early grants were mostly to support demonstrations and fund their evaluation. A series of grants helped NGOs prepare to design and implement evidence-informed programmes and practices. Some of the supported services were replications of ones developed elsewhere; others were new programmes designed and developed by local NGOs. For example, Barnardos NI used a survey of more than 1,000 children (undertaken by another Atlantic grantee, the Centre for Effective Education) to better understand the challenges faced by five to eight year olds from deprived areas. The children's responses directly contributed to the design of a new after-school service, called "Ready to Learn," focused on developing literacy and supporting parents to help their children's learning. A randomised control trial (RCT) showed the programme's positive effect on literacy outcomes. Barnardos NI has begun a modest scaling of the

programme from six to 12 schools while engaging with the Department of Education on a possible further expansion. Similarly, another grantee, Early Years, used an academic study of the prevalence of very young children making negative sectarian and racial remarks – one in six were doing so by the age of six. Early Years set out to pave a new future for young children, one in which religion is simply one aspect of their persona, rather than a cause for hate and exclusion.



Folk Day at Ulster American Folk Park, 2013 (Courtesy of Early Years)

Early Years used resources from Atlantic and the Peace Initiatives Institute to create, implement and test by RCT a programme aimed at children ages three and four that sought to instil more positive attitudes and behaviours towards those who are perceived as “different.” The programme uses a combination of cartoons, puppets, curriculum, training and support. An evaluation found strongly positive effects for children, parents and teachers.

“What Atlantic supported and challenged us to do was to become an organisation focusing on really growing our own evidence, using that evidence to think about how we could really improve outcomes for children.” - Siobhan Fitzpatrick, chief executive officer of Early Years

As a result of the evaluation findings, Early Years is taking this programme to scale across its network of 1,200 members in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

with support from government and the European Union. The programme has also generated considerable interest from post-conflict societies: In 2015, Early Years is rolling out the programme in Serbia, to complement its work in Albania and Ukraine. The BBC reported in late 2014 that thousands of pre-schools in the Republic of China would be adopting the Early Years model of early intervention to respect and normalise others' cultural norms and practices.

One of Atlantic's key investments in children's prevention and early intervention services was in the Colin neighbourhood in West Belfast, one of the most economically depressed areas in Northern Ireland. An assessment of children's services in the area revealed that while multiple services were available, families might not know about their availability or were not using them, and that government agencies were not coordinating these services effectively.

A local group—the Colin Early Intervention Community—took up the challenge of doing things differently. This community brought together funds from multiple government agencies and Atlantic to identify gaps and overlaps in services and to plan for greater interagency and provider cooperation and coordination. Where gaps were identified, appropriate, evidence-informed services were added. It created a sophisticated data tracking and measurement system to keep service providers and government on track and accountable, which is picking up on improvements in maternal depression, behaviour in classrooms, and speech and language services.

Gathering Evidence

Other investments went into university research centres and technical support organisations to build the capacity of practitioners and academics. About two-thirds of the Atlantic-funded projects were evaluated by RCT which provides strong evidence of effectiveness and was a highly under-used methodology. As results from the RCTs and other evaluation methods came online, there was a shift to supporting replication and scaling, and fine-tuning the implementation of successful programmes. Where possible, we funded this work in conjunction with government.

This injection of resources and expertise in rigorous forms of evaluation has led to huge expansion locally in skilled researchers and evaluators. For example, Queen's University Belfast now has a top-class educational trial unit, the Centre for Effective Education, which is entirely self-financing; a highly rated social care research centre, the Institute for Child Care Research; and a cross-disciplinary research network, Improving Children's Lives. Atlantic also funded The Centre for Effective Services, which works across the island, helps practitioners and policymakers make better use of evidence and support effective implementation of proven models and programmes.

Advocacy for Early Intervention

Having seeded a range of effective evidence-informed services and helped create a research and evidence-literate set of service providers, Atlantic increased its efforts to get government to take on board its learning and approaches. Each grantee was expected to be an advocate for the prevention and early intervention approach, and they were supported to create a formal network to present a unified and amplified voice to policymakers and funders. Senior officials and those responsible for commissioning children's services came together to learn evaluation results and, through access to study trips and conferences, became educated in the benefits of prevention. The voices of young people are typically missing in public policy debates that will influence their future. So Atlantic supported grantees to develop models to ensure that their voices were heard. For example, the Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC) used an online survey tool to teach about the best and worst of young people's experiences of being in the care system. The findings were used to challenge providers of care placements and to ensure that government officials take into account the views of young people as they develop policies that affect their futures.



VOYPIC 21st Birthday Celebration, 2014 (Courtesy of Voices of Young People in Care)

Sustaining the Peace Process (2014 and Beyond): Working with Government

As Atlantic staff envisioned how to make the most lasting impact with its work, the final phase of grantmaking in Northern Ireland focused on working with government to enshrine the successful models the foundation's grantees had helped develop, and to ensure the sustainability of key grantee organisations that will continue to hold government to account for providing services and for meeting its commitments in the peace agreement.

Reconciliation & Human Rights

Increasing Shared Education

Atlantic made a final three-year \$16.1 million grant in 2014 to create—in collaboration with the Department of Education NI and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister—a four-year programme to scale up shared education to more than 60 per cent of all schools in Northern Ireland. This first financial commitment to shared education from the Northern Ireland Executive amounts to \$24 million. More than 100 schools have already submitted shared education plans to the Department of Education which will scale up and mainstream work that Atlantic had previously supported. The Programme for Government contains a series of commitments to shared education and the Education Bill, which received royal assent in December 2014, includes a commitment by statutory bodies “to encourage, facilitate and promote shared education.” These commitments mean that shared education will be effectively mainstreamed across Northern Ireland. Integrated schools will also play their part in these new cross-sectoral partnerships as well as continuing to take up opportunities to expand formally integrated provision where they arise.

Strengthening NGOs to Protect Human Rights

Atlantic has invested more than \$21 million in advocating for and securing human rights in Northern Ireland over the past decade. This has involved encouraging and enabling grantees to develop innovative ways to make rights real “on the ground” and to hold government to account effectively. To ensure that these skills and methods are applied going forward, Atlantic has seeded a new Human Rights Fund that is drawing in contributions from new donors in this field. This fund will enable former Atlantic grantees to continue to protect and advance human rights and equality perspectives within Northern Ireland's public administration over the next decade.

Ageing

Improving the Care and Well-Being of People with Dementia

Since its initial investments in the dementia field in 2006, Atlantic's goal has been to influence the quality of life for many people in Northern Ireland so that best practice care is the norm and the support, services and environment exist to enable people with dementia to remain independent and in their own homes for as long as possible. To further that goal, Atlantic made grants of \$9.3 million in 2014 to support a joint initiative with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to accelerate and improve the implementation of the NI Dementia Strategy. Government contribution will be approximately \$14 million. The grant will support:

- Development and mainstreaming of models of respite care for people with dementia and their carers that allow them to remain independent and in their own homes for as long as possible
- Improved public awareness of dementia to prompt seeking early help and reducing the stigma, and better information and advice for people with dementia
- Creation of new skills and standards of care for the dementia workforce
- E-health and social care – Using connected health to improve the patient journey for people with dementia and better support families and carers
- Supported housing – Encouraging sustainability and further development of supported living models to maintain independent living for as long as possible
- Dementia analytics – Building the capacity to collect and use dementia data to improve the planning and commissioning of effective and good value for money dementia services.

Children & Youth

Transforming Children's Services through Prevention and Early Intervention

Atlantic's investments in the children's field have influenced the way that government funds and that organisations provide services. The work has focused on shifting away from providing reactive and disconnected services to a scaled, evidence-based approach that tackles problems in children's lives before they reach crisis levels.

A three-year \$16.1 million grant creates a joint initiative, the Early Intervention Transformation Programme, between Atlantic and six of the government departments of the Northern Ireland Executive. The initiative will focus on redesigning government services for the most vulnerable children and youth; rolling out evidence-informed programmes supporting children and families; and embedding prevention and early intervention approaches in the training of staff working in children's services across all

health and social care settings, education, youth work and youth justice. Much of the redesign and coordination of service delivery will be based on the successes in the Colin community, as noted previously.

Conclusion

Atlantic's investments in Northern Ireland began with Chuck Feeney's shock over one of the worst acts of violence during The Troubles. That shock soon turned to financial assistance at a time when few outside donors were willing to invest in this volatile area. Atlantic's willingness to take risks and invest in people and communities provided needed support in a time when the prospects for peace were still fragile and could easily be undone. Supporting ex-prisoners and community restorative justice in the most conflict-ridden communities helped provide the leadership and infrastructure for a new, peaceful society.

"In terms of Atlantic leaving the stage, I have never been pessimistic about that because as an organisation they've given us 17 years of funding to build our organisation and has put us onto an international stage," said Debbie Watters, assistant director of Northern Ireland Alternatives. "We, in Northern Ireland, have become one of the world leaders in community-based restorative justice, and we have a model now where community and statutory and government agencies work together. That's one of the biggest legacies Atlantic has left and will continue to leave across the world. They were there when we didn't have a voice, and they helped grow us from the bottom up. We wouldn't be here, we wouldn't be the organisation that we are today, without Atlantic Philanthropies."

At the same time, Atlantic made large investments in a higher education system that was at a competitive disadvantage in attracting faculty after years of conflict. Those investments have made a lasting difference on the universities in Northern Ireland.

"We will miss Atlantic when it disappears, but Atlantic has transformed us," said Professor Patrick Johnston, president and vice chancellor of Queen's University Belfast. "We now raise money with or without Atlantic. We have the confidence to go anywhere in the world to talk about our projects with key people who can continue to help us grow. When we go and talk about the amount of help Atlantic has given us, people listen carefully, and we can point to very concrete examples, not just of the investment, but of the impact of that investment and the sustainability. That's the key thing here; not developing something for two or three years, (but) developing it for generations to come."

Atlantic further invested in the supports needed to cement the peace process. The Reconciliation & Human Rights, Ageing, and Children & Youth Programmes supported the infrastructure needed to ensure that people of Northern Ireland, particularly those in disadvantaged communities received the services necessary to live healthier lives. These programmes established a research infrastructure to help make sure that public policy is based on sound evidence. They also provided skills and training so that people who had previously had little experience speaking up for their rights can now do so effectively.

“We've encouraged people and supported people to do things differently,” said Padraic Quirk, country director for Northern Ireland. “We've supported innovation in the delivery of public services and we've supported people to learn and to use skills in order to hold government to account. We've built across all of our programmes a capacity and a skill set which empowers people so they aren't going to say ‘I'm just happy with my lot and that's ok.’ We've encouraged communities and leaders in everything that we do—to really ask the hard questions that needed to be asked, to give them the skills to ask those questions, and to use evidence to ensure that services are delivered in a way which really is beneficial to the people that matter most.”

The most effective work that Atlantic has supported will be enshrined in policy through joint government agreements on prevention and early intervention services for children, shared education and dementia care. That work will ultimately touch on virtually everyone in Northern Ireland.

Through one of its final grants in Northern Ireland, in 2014 Atlantic supported the inception of a new entity, the Social Change Initiative, led by longtime Atlantic leader Martin O'Brien, to bring the lessons from two-and-a-half decades of grantmaking for peace and human rights to other divided societies around the world.

As Atlantic exits Northern Ireland, it is evident that Chuck Feeney and the foundation staff's vision of helping to build a lasting and sustainable peace is coming to pass.