

Pupils have Designs on a Shared Future at new Housing Schemes



CAPTION: Morgan Hall, Khadja Ali, Jordan McNally and Caleb O'Shea from Forge Integrated and Holy Rosary Primary Schools in South Belfast

More than 400 children from primary schools in Belfast, Banbridge and South Down have taken part in art workshops over the coming weeks to help lay foundations for new shared neighbourhood projects in their local areas.

Clanmil Housing is building 103 homes across three sites - in South Belfast, Banbridge and Dundrum - that are being promoted as shared neighbourhoods.

The fun and educational arts programme has been organised by ***Clanmil*** working with Community Arts Partnership to provide pupils from 10 primary schools across the three areas with opportunities to come together in their communities to reflect on and engage creatively around their identity. Through the project the children have been encouraged to consider the concept of Shared Neighbourhoods and the reality of segregation and to explore possibilities for the future.

The children's ideas will be used to inspire unique artworks or sculptures for permanent display within each of the new Shared Neighbourhoods.

The new developments are three of ten shared neighbourhoods to be delivered under the Northern Ireland Executive's Together: Building a United Community (TBUC) strategy, which aims to build a more shared society.

Tim O'Malley, Community Development Manager at **Clanmil Housing** said:

"The concept of sharing where we live can be a complex issue and this project is about encouraging the children to explore and develop ideas through art that are relevant to them and their families. The images they are creating together wonderfully capture how young people want the future to be and how people of all backgrounds can make better progress together.

"It is crucial that we take their creative ideas on board and move forward in a positive way.

"We see housing as central to driving change and these new homes, which are welcoming for everyone, are a strong step forward. Not only will the new homes help reduce housing waiting lists but they will also provide people with the choice of living in a safe neighbourhood that welcomes diversity."

Shared housing schemes give people the choice of living in neighbourhoods with people from many backgrounds and traditions and **Clanmil** is committed to delivering homes that are welcoming to all.

Charo Lanao, Community Facilitator at Community Arts Partnership, said:

"This creative project has really captured the children's imagination and enthusiasm. Their ideas will inspire amazing artworks for these communities to enjoy for years to come.

"It's lovely to see new friendships form among the pupils as they engage in new conversations about important community issues and we hope these connections will continue beyond this project.

"Building relationships and holding meaningful conversations are at the foundation of a healthy neighbourhood."