



11th–18th October 2025

Voicing the Void Restorative Storytelling Festival 2025



ACTS OF SURVIVAL



Voicing the Void Amplifying Voices, Inspiring Change

Above - Rory Doherty - Founder VTV

Who We Are

Voicing the Void is a Belfast-based, youth-led social enterprise dedicated to creating personal and societal change through restorative storytelling. We believe in a more compassionate, inclusive society where every voice is valued, and every story has the power to inspire change.

We provide safe, supportive spaces where marginalised voices; too often silenced, ignored, or misrepresented can be heard. Through storytelling, we empower individuals and communities to heal, connect, and advocate for change.

Our Belief

At Voicing the Void, we believe in the transformative power of restorative storytelling. In a world where media often amplifies devastation and division, stories of hope, resilience, and recovery are too often overlooked. Yet these narratives of individuals and communities overcoming adversity are essential for empathy, healing, and societal progress.

When diverse stories are given space, they can challenge prejudice, deepen empathy, and create the conditions for change.

How We Work

Our work is grounded in restorative practice and trauma-informed approaches, ensuring that participants are supported throughout their storytelling journey. We partner with communities, schools, cultural venues, and statutory organisations to create spaces for dialogue and change. From one-to-one support to public showcases, our programmes meet people where they are and build pathways towards empowerment.

Voicing the Void has supported refugees and people seeking international protection, LGBTQIA+ people, victims and survivors of serious crime, and young people facing exclusion; always working alongside participants to co-create safe, dignified, and impactful opportunities to share their stories.

Recognition

Winner –
Hummingbird Awards 2025
(Community Project: Equality, Diversity & Inclusion)

Finalist –
NI Social Enterprise Awards 2025 (Building Diversity category)

Learn more about our services and upcoming programmes at voicingthevoid.com

The Core Pillars of our Work

Storytelling –
Workshops, performances, and digital projects amplifying lived experience.

Civic Engagement –
Platforms for dialogue between communities, policymakers, and decision-makers.

Support –
Trauma-informed, resilience-based practices that help people and communities grow.

We deliver OCN NI accredited restorative storytelling courses (Levels 1 & 2) alongside programmes in leadership, advocacy, creative writing, audiovisual storytelling, and outreach workshops. All are co-facilitated by people with lived experience to ensure authenticity and impact.

Our storytelling approach fosters empathy, challenges prejudice, and builds meaningful connections - a proven pathway to lasting change.

Restorative Storytelling Festival 2025
'Acts of Survival'
11-18 October
Hate Crime Awareness Week

This October, Voicing the Void proudly presents the inaugural Restorative Storytelling Festival; a week-long celebration of creativity, resilience, and community.

With 22 events across seven days, Belfast will come alive with theatre, workshops, storytelling, dance, film, exhibitions, and dialogue. Open to all, the festival offers space to take part, listen, and learn - with something to inspire everyone.

At its heart lies a simple belief: every person carries a story that matters. This festival provides a safe and supportive space for those stories to be heard, opening doors to empathy, healing, and understanding, and building bridges across the divisions in our society.

As the African proverb reminds us: "It takes a village to raise a child." At VTV, we believe it also takes communities to build a more compassionate world. This festival grows from a community spirit of collaboration, bringing individuals and organisations together around shared values and a common vision. Alongside so many inspiring partners, we are creating spaces where resilience, creativity, personal growth, and connection can flourish.

From Kintsugi pottery and collage workshops, to spoken word performances, creative writing, movement and mindfulness, the festival invites people of all ages to connect with themselves and each other. Highlights include Restorative Acts: Stories on Stage at the Black Box, the Restorative Writing Course: Restoring Hope, and the premiere of Radicalgorithm, a short film exploring online hate and radicalisation. The week will close with Sacred Rave: Dancing and Celebration at Carlisle Memorial Church, a powerful celebration of collective movement and joy.

Join us to amplify voices, celebrate resilience, and shape a more compassionate, inclusive society.

Tickets



For tickets please scan QR code or visit-
bit.ly/VTVFestival2025

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Survival

This is not an ACT

This is real life

Liz's Story-
A Right to Be Heard-
The Black Box
Thurs 16 Oct
7pm-9pm

In 1988, Liz Adair's eight-year-old sister Sue-
Ellen was murdered by their uncle. Decades later,
Liz made history as the first victim in Northern
Ireland to speak at a parole board hearing.

Exhibition Opening

Join us as we open the Restorative Storytelling Festival 'Acts of Survival' with moving spoken word performances that create space for women impacted by violence to share their stories. We will also premiere a short video, 'Acts of Community', which shines a light on everyday kindness – the small gestures that can transform someone's day.

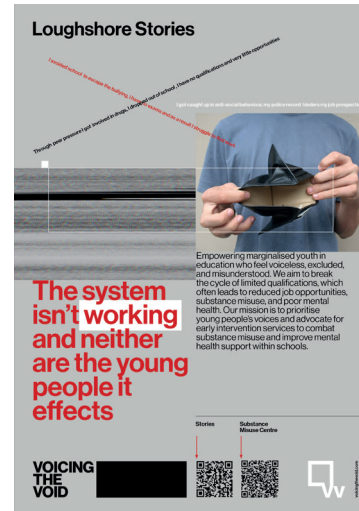
Our city is full of character, warmth, and resilience. It is welcoming and friendly, and this event celebrates those positive stories that often go unheard. Like ripples in water, acts of kindness spread outward, inspiring hope and connection across our communities.

Throughout the week, 2 Royal Avenue will become a hub for creativity, dialogue, and community, hosting a series of workshops, talks, and events. Alongside this, we will present an exhibition of past projects through panels and digital displays. These stories reflect lived experiences of resilience, hope, and change, offering space for reflection and connection.

Storytelling festivals have always brought people together through shared cultural experiences, fostering understanding across divides and creating belonging. At Voicing the Void, our mission is to enable, empower, and encourage those whose voices have too often been silenced or overlooked to find and share their stories. This exhibition invites you to step into those stories, experience their depth, and explore how they can build empathy and inspire change.

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Sat 11 Oct
2pm–2.40pm
3pm–3.40pm



South Asian Dance Academy – World Culture Movement & Dance Workshops

Join the South Asian Dance Academy (SADA) for two lively and inclusive workshops that combine movement, dance, and storytelling. No previous experience is needed - everyone is welcome to take part, connect, and discover how stories can be told through rhythm, gesture, and expression.

Based in Belfast, SADA brings the rich traditions of Kathak and Bollywood to local communities, blending cultural heritage with contemporary creativity. Supported by ArtsEkta and the Heritage Lottery Fund, their workshops invite participants to explore identity and culture through the universal languages of dance and story, creating space for connection and celebration across communities.

Sun 12 Oct
Workshop 01 / 10am–12pm
Workshop 02 / 1pm–3pm

Join us for a restorative two-hour Qigong workshop, blending movement, breath, and meditation to nurture wellbeing and connection. Qigong (pronounced chee-gong) is an ancient Chinese practice, rooted in Traditional Chinese Medicine, that has supported health and balance for over 4,000 years.

Through gentle, flowing exercises, mindful breathing, and meditative awareness, Qigong helps to restore energy, reduce stress, and bring harmony to body and mind. Suitable for all ages and abilities, these workshops offer an accessible introduction to a practice that enhances circulation, calms the nervous system, and fosters resilience.

Led by experienced instructor David Barr, you'll explore both the philosophy and practical foundations of Qigong while experiencing its power to restore calm, vitality, and presence.

No experience is required – just comfortable clothing and an openness to connect with yourself and others in a supportive, healing space.

Qigong Workshops



Sun 12 Oct
12pm–2pm



Unlocking Symbols— A Collage Workshop

Step into a space of imagination and discovery with this hands-on collage workshop, led by Belfast-based artist and illustrator Bethany Millican. Using words, images, and chance prompts as starting points, you'll be guided to uncover the hidden symbols and personal narratives that lie within your own inner world.

Collage is an accessible and playful art form that invites us to see meaning in unexpected places and to bring fragments together into something whole. Whether you're completely new to creative practice or already use art in your daily life, this workshop offers an opportunity to slow down, experiment, and connect with your creativity in a supportive environment.

Bethany's work is rooted in poetic symbolism and the everyday magic found in nature and objects. Through drawing, print, poetry, and collage, she shares the belief that meaning can be discovered everywhere when we pay attention. In this workshop, she will guide you in exploring that same spirit of curiosity, helping you create a piece that is uniquely yours.

No previous art experience is needed, just an open mind, a willingness to play, and a curiosity to see what unfolds.

Image - Bethany Millican

Venue / 2 Royal Avenue - Belfast

Sun 12 Oct
1pm–4pm

Kintsugi Workshop— Restoring Through Brokenness

Kintsugi; the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with gold, teaches us that cracks and fractures can become sites of beauty, strength, and renewal. In this hands-on workshop, we explore Kintsugi not only as a creative practice but as a powerful metaphor for healing and restoring parts of ourselves.

Through the mindful process of piecing together what is broken, we reflect on our own journeys of loss, resilience, and transformation. Just as Kintsugi honours the story of an object rather than hiding its damage, this practice invites us to embrace our imperfections and see them as a source of wisdom and strength.

Come join us in this gentle space of creativity and reflection, where brokenness becomes a pathway to wholeness, connection, and hope. This workshop will be delivered by the founder of Voicing The Void, Rory Doherty.

No artistic experience is needed; simply curiosity and a willingness to explore. All materials will be provided.



Venue / Voicing The Void - Belfast

Mon 13 Oct
12pm–2.30pm

Introduction to the Community Resiliency Model (CRM)[®]



This workshop will introduce the Community Resiliency Model (CRM)[®], a trauma and resiliency-informed model that is being used throughout Ireland and in 80 countries around the world. This model focuses on building awareness of common stress and trauma responses, as well as teaching six wellbeing tools that can be used by groups and individuals to support their own resilience following adversity. CRM focuses on the biology of trauma and wellbeing, supporting people to better understand their own body's response to stressors and providing practical ways to return the body to balance during or after stressful experiences. The workshop will guide participants through the theory and practice of all six wellness skills.

Venue / 2 Royal Avenue - Belfast

Workshop delivered by
Sara Cook + Rory Doherty

Online Course

Writing has the power to heal, connect, and transform. This four-week online course facilitated by Hannah Eynon invites participants to explore the practice of restorative writing; using words as a tool to process experience, reclaim voice, and re-imagine possibility.

Through guided prompts, shared examples, and supportive discussion, you'll discover how storytelling can restore dignity, foster empathy, and open pathways to hope. Each week offers space to reflect, write, and share at your own pace, moving from gentle beginnings to shaping your own restorative story.

By the end of the course, participants will have crafted a piece of restorative writing that not only reflects their journey but also highlights why our stories matter for healing, connection, and social change.

No prior writing experience is needed — just a willingness to put pen to paper and explore the stories within.

Restorative Writing Course— Facilitated by Hannah Eynon

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4 Weeks Online / 2 Hours Each Session

Above - Hannah Eynon

Mon 13 Oct / 7pm–9pm
(6 week course)

Step onto the stage with confidence!

This six-week course invites you to explore your voice and movement, work on poetry, prose, and your own sense of storytelling. In a supportive and playful space, you'll build confidence in your creativity. Whether you're new to self-reflection or performance or simply looking to refine your craft, each session offers practical techniques and opportunities to create and share.

By the end, you'll feel more at ease with public speaking, more expressive in your everyday life, and more empowered to use performance as a tool for self-expression. Led by working artist Wilson McDowell—an actor, writer, and director with training from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and The Lir Academy—this course brings together a wealth of professional experience to help you discover the joy of performance, the power of presence, and the creativity within you.

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How to Prepare for a Performance—Cultivate Your Confidence, Communication, and Imagination

Image - Wilson McDowell

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Tue 14 Oct
12pm–2pm

Unlocking Symbols—A Collage Workshop with Artist Bethany Millican

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No previous art experience is needed, just an open mind, a willingness to play, and a curiosity to see what unfolds.

This workshop is delivered in partnership with Groundwork East Belfast and will take place in their beautiful Connswater Community Garden, offering a unique outdoor setting to inspire creativity and connection.

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Image - Bethany Millican

Venue / Connswater Street - Belfast

Tue 14 Oct
6pm–8pm



Energy Reset– Balancing the Nervous System, Chakras & Aura

Energy Reset: Discover the art of inner balance in this beginner-friendly workshop with Swapnali of SoulSync Wellness. Through EFT Tapping, chakra meditation, and aura awareness, you'll learn simple practices to calm the nervous system, release stress, and reconnect with your natural energy.

Stress and emotional overload can leave both mind and body unsettled. This restorative session offers gentle, practical techniques to bring balance, clarity, and calm.

You'll begin with EFT Tapping (Emotional Freedom Techniques) – a simple yet powerful method using acupressure points to release stress and soothe the nervous system. From there, a guided chakra-balancing meditation will help align the body's seven energy centres, restoring clarity, resilience, and inner peace.

Finally, you'll explore aura awareness, learning to sense and connect with the subtle energy field that surrounds you. Together, these practices create a pathway to self-connection, emotional healing, and energetic renewal.

This two-hour session is open to all, with no prior experience needed. You'll leave feeling grounded, centred, and reconnected to your own energy and story.

Above - Swapnali De

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Wed 15 Oct
3pm–4pm

This is part of a **4-week course**, you're welcome to join for one, some, or all of the sessions. Please note: the remaining three workshops will take place on Wednesdays at the same time, hosted at Voicing the Void, Olive Tree House. Join Syrian artist Seba Brhom for a unique workshop using fabric as a medium for storytelling, memory, and self-expression. Cloth becomes both canvas and symbol, inviting you to reflect on your own journey weaving together fragments of the past, present, and hopes for the future.

For Seba, art is more than creativity: it is a way to express our voices and stories, to share culture, and to learn sustainable practices like recycling. Through this hands-on session, you'll have the chance to create a piece that speaks to your experiences while connecting with others in a shared space of creativity, reflection, and cultural exchange.

No previous art experience is needed just openness, curiosity, and a willingness to explore how fabric can hold and share the stories that shape us.

Threads of Memory– A Fabric Art Workshop with Seba Brhom



Venue / 2 Royal Avenue - Belfast

Image - Seba Brhom

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Wed 15 Oct
6pm–8pm

Restoring Hope— Creative Writing Course with Raja Obeid

This 6-week bilingual course (English and Arabic) offers a safe and supportive space to explore the healing power of creative writing. Facilitated by Raja Obeid, participants will be gently guided through writing prompts, storytelling exercises, and group discussions designed to spark reflection, connection, and self-expression.

Each week builds on the last, encouraging participants to share experiences, exchange ideas, and nurture resilience through the written word. Together, the group will work towards shaping a personal poem. A creative piece that embodies themes of strength, hope, and possibility.

Whether you are new to writing or already use words to capture your thoughts and feelings, this course provides a unique opportunity to connect across cultures and languages, discover new perspectives, and restore hope through creativity.

No previous experience is needed, only an openness to explore and to share your voice in community with others.

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Above - Raja with flowers

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Wed 15 Oct
7pm–9.30pm

Navigating Conversations About Migration with ACT NOW NI

Act Now NI is a people-powered campaigning community in Northern Ireland with over 30,000 members. Act Now helps people to come together to take action on the issues they care about most to make Northern Ireland a better, fairer, more equal place for everyone. They are independently funded and don't accept money from corporations, banks or government bodies.

Navigating Conversations About Migration is a 2-hour session that's designed to support you to feel more confident having productive conversations about migration. This might be for you if you're interested in bringing people into the conversation; building on previous work around myth busting, and taking a trauma-informed approach to conversations.



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In this session we'll cover-

- How Attitudes and Opinions Form
- Why Now?
- Who to Have These Conversations With
- Different Techniques We Can Use
- Time to Practise Our Responses

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Delivered by ACT NOW

Thur 16 Oct
7pm–9.30pm

Join us for an evening of powerful performance where words and stories come alive on stage. This special event features eight short plays and spoken word pieces created through our restorative storytelling projects, sharing real experiences of resilience, hope, and change.

The performances span diverse journeys; from survivors of violence and refugees seeking safety, to members of the LGBTQIA+ community, victims of hate crime, and voices from communities historically divided. Each story offers a glimpse into the strength of the human spirit and the possibility of transformation.

Some pieces will be performed by participants themselves, while others will be shared by professional actors on their behalf, ensuring stories can be told with integrity while protecting the wellbeing of the storytellers.

At its heart, the Restorative Storytelling Festival is about amplifying voices too often silenced, celebrating creativity, and building connection through the universal power of story. Expect honesty, courage, and inspiration in a space where art becomes a catalyst for empathy, understanding, and change.

Restorative Acts— Stories on Stage

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AMPLIFY

!Content note: Some stories include themes of violence, loss, and discrimination. We recommend this event for audiences aged 18+.

THE STORIES

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Fri 17 Oct
12pm–2.30pm

The Biology of Storytelling– How Storytelling Impacts the Body and How to Create Safer Spaces for Storytelling



Sharing our stories can create profound changes within us mentally and emotionally, but storytelling also has a biological impact when sharing lived experiences. This workshop by Sara Cook, explores the biological, or body-based, impact of both telling and hearing personal stories. Workshop participants will learn about the biology behind the positive impact we experience when engaging with the stories of others, both individually and collectively. It will also explore some of the potentially difficult impacts from hearing stories of adversity and how those impacts can be reduced or prevented by utilising resiliency tools within storytelling environments.

This workshop will be relevant to facilitators and participants in storytelling spaces and similar transformational processes.

Fri 17 Oct
12pm–3pm

This workshop is run by Lydia, an art therapist who deeply believes in the power of community and creativity to facilitate personal and collective healing and growth.

The workshop fuses creativity and cacao with mythopoetic storytelling in order to encounter the wisdom of your unconscious. All art you make is a means of expressing yourself and exploring your inner landscape, rather than any pressure of making art to put in a frame.

This workshop will be centred around the concept of using mark-making, colour, and art media as a means of non-verbal processing - something accessible to all of us, not just artists. This is a friendly space in which the wisdom and expression of each participant is warmly welcomed and honoured.

Awaken your creative alchemy and discover the transformative power of community and expression.

Awakening Creative Alchemy Workshop



Fri 17 Oct
6.30pm–8pm

Step into a truly transformative journey for mind, body, and soul with The White Wolf Experience led by Aidan Malone. Rooted in passion and lived experience, this workshop weaves together breathwork, mindfulness, movement, and meditation into an uplifting practice like no other.

Expect joyous movement that reconnects you with your body, grounding mindfulness to steady your mind, breathwork that revitalises your energy, and meditation that brings it all together in a state of deep calm and clarity.

More than just a workshop, this is an experience – immersive, energising, and unforgettable. Words can only capture so much: the real magic is in taking part.

Come along, join the journey, and be part of an uplifting experience for mind, body, and soul.

The White Wolf Experience— Breathwork, Mindfulness, Movement & Meditation



Above - Aidan Malone

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Sat 18 Oct
Workshop 01 / 1pm–2pm
Workshop 02 / 3pm–4pm

Still I Rise— Restorative Storytelling for Children (Ages 4–11)

25

Still I Rise will host a storytelling session for children aged 4–11. Through carefully chosen stories and interactive activities, children will explore kindness, respect, and belonging, while learning to celebrate differences and stand against hate.

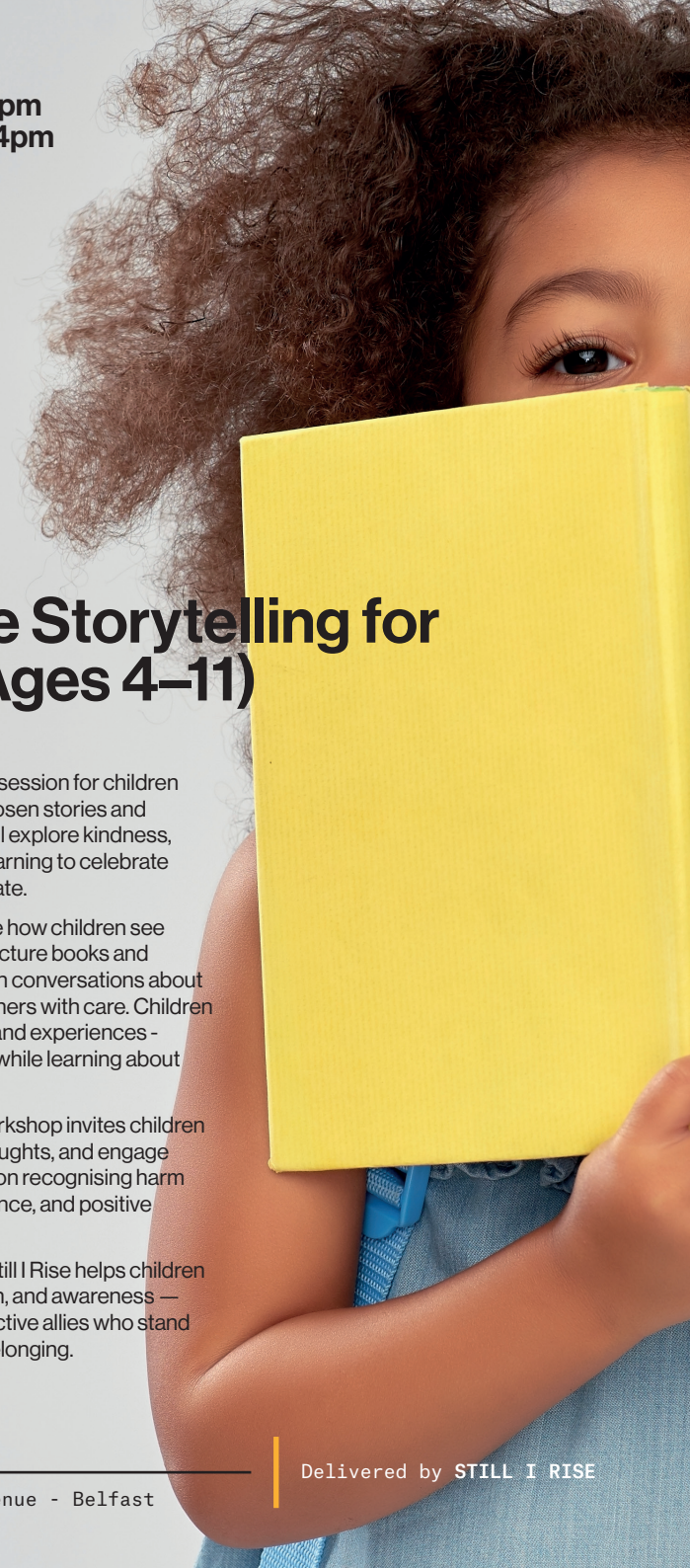
Stories have the power to shape how children see themselves and others. Using picture books and discussion, this session will open conversations about identity, respect, and treating others with care. Children will encounter diverse cultures and experiences - seeing their own lives reflected while learning about those of others.

Interactive and inclusive, the workshop invites children to ask questions, share their thoughts, and engage creatively. The focus is not only on recognising harm but also on building hope, resilience, and positive action.

By planting these seeds early, Still I Rise helps children grow in confidence, compassion, and awareness — encouraging them to become active allies who stand up against hate and embrace belonging.

Venue / 2 Royal Avenue - Belfast

Delivered by STILL I RISE



Sat 18 Oct
3.30pm–5.30pm

Taking place during Hate Crime Awareness Week, the event is part of Queen's University's Sanctuary Mission and has made possible through collaboration with Queen's Film Theatre and the Civic Engagement and Strategic Communications Directorate.

Join us for an afternoon of films and performances exploring resilience, compassion, and the urgent challenges of our digital age.

Voicing the Void and Queen's University Belfast present

Stories of Survival and Change— Film & Spoken Word

Two Syrian women return to the stage after sharing their stories last year, reflecting on the past year and exploring themes such as family reunion, creativity, and hope for the future. We'll also hear from a local woman whose perspective was deeply shifted at last year's event, inspiring her to see her community and its diversity in a new light.

The event also marks the première of *Radicalalgorithm*, a short documentary by filmmaker Colm Teague. This thought-provoking film questions the ethics of social media algorithms that prioritise attention over safety, fuelling hate, radicalisation, and discrimination. It asks: who is accountable; governments, tech companies, or users themselves? Featuring insights from Ciaran O'Connor, Data Analyst at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, the film challenges us to consider how online spaces shape real-world harm, and how early intervention and community awareness can counter these dangers.

We are delighted to welcome Professor Tim Chapman, EX-Chair of the European Forum for Restorative Justice and one of Europe's leading thinkers on restorative practice. Tim will offer a short talk (10–15 minutes) on the value of restorative, lived-experience-led approaches in creating meaningful change, followed by a Q&A with filmmaker Colm Teague, Seba Brhom VTV storyteller, chaired by Voicing the Void Steering Group member Joel Bingham.

Blending story, film, and dialogue, this event is both a celebration of resilience and a challenge to reflect on the systems shaping our lives.



Sat 18 Oct
7pm–9pm

Born in Belfast, the Sacred Rave has been creating conscious ritual dance spaces for over 2 years from the Falls Road to the Cathedral Quarter, and now in the awe-inspiring Gothic Memorial Church.

Led by Kerri, the founder of Sacred Rave, this is not just a dance - it is a ceremony. Together we will gather in a space of liberation, guided by cacao, music, and movement, to remember what it means to feel fully alive. Sacred Rave is about returning to the body, reconnecting with each other, and celebrating the wild, sacred pulse that unites us all.

As the closing celebration of the Restorative Storytelling Festival, this event invites us to come together in collective joy, honouring the stories, connections, and resilience shared throughout the week.

Expect an evening of dynamic dance, deep embodied motion, and restful meditation. No alcohol, no judgment; just freedom to move, express, release, and choose love over and over again.

Bring comfortable clothes, water, and an open heart. Cups for cacao will be provided. All are welcome.

Join us for a night of sacred movement, connection, and celebration, a dance you won't forget.

Sacred Rave— Dancing at Carlisle Memorial Church

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Special Thanks

Woven together with care, creativity, and community spirit, this festival has been made possible through the dedication of our partner organisations, individual artists, our Steering Group, and our Board of Directors. We are deeply grateful for your belief in the power of storytelling.

Together we have created a collective act of courage and compassion, reminding us that stories can spark ideas, nurture connections, and act as bridges that heal and inspire. They show us that every life carries dignity, resilience, and hope.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our principal funders – the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, whose support sustains our core work and this festival, and UnLtd, who have also stood with us from the beginning and continue to strengthen our journey through their Scale It Up Award and Systems Change Award in partnership with the Henry Smith Foundation. Special thanks also to Belfast Police and Community Safety Partnership, the Community Relations Council, and the Public Health Agency through the Clear Project, whose support has enabled key workshops and programmes to take place. Finally, to local business Established Coffee - thank you for standing with us and for believing, as we do, in the power of community and connection.

Above all, we thank the individuals who have had the courage to share their stories in the hope of inspiring change, challenging injustice, and reminding us all of the strength that comes from truth and humanity.

This is the story we are telling: one of courage, compassion, and hope. And it is a story we invite you to carry forward long after the festival ends.

Sponsors



Supported by the Public Health Agency through the Clear Project



This film/publication/event has received support from the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council which aims to promote a pluralist society characterised by equity, respect for diversity, and recognition of interdependence. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Community Relations Council.

Venues

Voicing The Void

Olive Tree House
23 Fountain Street
Belfast
BT1 5EA

2 Royal Avenue

2 Royal Avenue
Belfast
BT1 1DA

Black Box

18-22 Hill Street
Belfast
BT1 2LA

Queen's Film Theatre

20 University Square
Belfast
BT7 1PA

Connswater Meanwhile Garden

Connswater Street
Belfast
BT4

Carlisle Memorial Church

Carlisle Circus
Belfast
BT13 1AB

Tickets



For tickets please scan QR code or visit–
bit.ly/VTVFestival2025

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Voicing the Void Restorative Storytelling Festival 2025

**The planet does not
need more successful
people. The planet
desperately needs
more peacemakers,
healers, restorers,
storytellers and lovers
of all kinds.**

Dalai Lama



web
email
instagram
facebook

voicingthevoid.com
admin@voicingthevoid.com
@VoicingTheVoidNI
@VoicingTheVoidNI

Olive Tree House
23 Fountain Street
Belfast
BT1 5EA