



174 Trust

Growing Stronger Together

Our Strategy
2025-2030



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Introduction

174 Trust supports people from different communities 65,000 times each year at The Duncairn Centre, providing a safe and welcoming place for us all to create a better future together.

Over the years, we have nurtured the potential of thousands of people and scores of projects which has created the 174 Trust as we know it today.

As we seek to make a positive contribution in the future, we recognise the best way to do this is by working well with each other interdependently. We will continue to strengthen each of our projects and nurture cohesion between us, to create new possibilities and opportunities which contribute to the common good in North Belfast and beyond.

This strategy is another part of the ever-progressing story of the 174 Trust and of North Belfast.

Over the last year, the leadership team has spent time working with staff, volunteers, stakeholders and beneficiaries to help us co-create a new strategy for 2025 – 2030. In doing so, we have drawn deeply on our inspirational founding story, evaluated our current operations and context, and developed this new strategy. We believe this strategy will enable us to contribute positively to the wellbeing of communities in North Belfast now and into the future.



Our Vision



Our Vision

Our vision for the next 5 years is **to support thousands of people to survive and thrive together, in North Belfast and beyond.**

This is the place of unity for everyone and everything within 174 Trust; it is the core function and intention of each volunteer and team member and of every project that we run and that we host.

The Trust directly engages and empowers people over 65,000 times each year through our community and arts-based programmes; and we reach further through the other projects and organisations that we nurture, facilitate and 'hot-house' as tenants in our Duncairn and Macrory Centres.

To achieve this vision and our entire strategy, we outwork a set of four core values:

- **Collaboration** – We work 'with' and alongside individuals, communities and partners to unlock new possibilities and opportunities in response to marginalisation.
- **Creativity** – We support and encourage each other to nurture creative talent and utilise innovative ways to respond to challenge.
- **Hope** – We believe that positive change can happen, and we encourage this change in our action.
- **Inclusion** – We actively seek to welcome, and build relationships between, people from diverse communities, particularly those who have experienced marginalisation.
- **Leadership** – we intentionally inspire and empower others to lead and take initiative, engaging at all levels of our society, and fostering a shared environment that encourages positive change and growth in an inner-city that remains in the midst of reconciliation.





While our work has many positive outcomes for the thousands of people that we support, one unifying purpose is our intentional focus on building and repairing relationships in our local community and society in general. As such, our vision purposefully and intentionally aligns with 'Positive Peacebuilding', a globally recognised model which outlines the optimal environment for human potential to flourish (IEP, 2019).

Our strategy and approach contribute towards many of the 'Positive Peace Pillars', providing many positive outcomes that are interconnected and interdependent in their positive contribution to North Belfast and beyond.

- We create **good relations with neighbours** by welcoming and nurturing relationships with over 65,000 people from diverse backgrounds, through our own arts centre, disability clubs and pre-school, our good relations programmes and the range of cross-community services offered by our tenants.
- We tackle marginalisation, creating a more **equitable distribution of resources**, through our programmes and with our partners, to people from disadvantaged and marginalised communities. At the point of crisis we offer clothes through our clothes bank and support a range of services through our tenants for vulnerable people. Our pre-school, disability clubs and arts centre actively support people from marginalised communities to access services, helping them better participate in wider society.
- We contribute towards a **sound business environment** by operating our own charity sustainably and providing premises and support for local businesses and charities, who in turn provide local jobs and services.
- We encourage a **well-functioning government** by working closely with government bodies from across Northern Ireland, Ireland and internationally in creating a better future for all.



Our Story



Our Story

The 174 Trust is a place of encounter, where relationships can be built over time and people can experience new, and sometimes challenging, things. It is a place of transformation, where people hope for and build a positive future. It is a space where people can share their contribution to North Belfast's cultural, social, political and economic rebirth.

Then

The 174 Trust was founded in 1983 by a group of people from Duncairn Presbyterian Church, to be 'a local Christian witness without denominational bias or sectarian prejudice' in the lower North Belfast. Against the backdrop of the conflict known as The Troubles, our founders, staff and volunteers worked to 'build relationships with local people, working together to identify and meet local needs.' This led to the opening of the Salt Shaker café and the delivery of a number of children's and youth clubs.

In 1995, the 174 Trust bought the vacated Duncairn Presbyterian Church buildings, which were developed into a 'shared space' for local communities. During this period, the Trust started a pre-school and a disability programme, which have provided education and support for scores of children, young people and adults over the years. We also provided a home for local charities, community groups and businesses, which provide much needed local services and job.

In 2014, we completed the refurbishment of the former church and officially opened the multi-award winning Duncairn Centre for Culture and Arts. Our centre has become a shining beacon for the local community, providing a space where thousands of people every year can enjoy classes, concerts, exhibitions and workshops.

In 2019, we bought the Macrory, a disused Presbyterian church hall which is situated on the dividing line between Tiger's Bay and the New Lodge. Since then, we have supported a local boxing club to run programmes enabling scores of children, young people and adults from both communities to build relationships and learn new skills together.

Now

We welcome over 65,000 people every year through our community and arts-based programmes, and those of our tenants.



Pre-School

Since its founding in 1995, the pre-school has been an integral part of the 174 Trust's family work. We endeavour to address the play and educational needs of children in and around the North Belfast area. Our hope for every child who goes through the 174 Trust Pre-School is that they leave with a keen desire to learn, a foundation for independence, and a respect for others.

In an area experiencing high levels of deprivation and marginalisation, this project is vital in the establishment of good relations with neighbours from a young age and in increasing the levels of human capital in north Belfast in the long term. Our curriculum focuses strongly on understanding the rights of others, ensuring that we continue to build newness and positivity with the next generation in North Belfast.

Disability Clubs

The 174 Trust Disability Club brings people with disabilities visibly into the heart of our organisation. While providing support, we want to ensure that our team models the acceptance of rights of others and that we are able to equitably distribute our resources in response to human need.

The project serves as a wonderful social outlet, where children, young people and young adults can play, learn, and create. This includes young people with autism, downs syndrome, wheelchair users, severe learning disabilities, sight loss, hearing loss, challenging behaviour, or a combination of complex needs.

All of the participants in our project are referred to us by social services. Among these we have an increasing number of L.A.C. Children (looked after children by foster parents) or children in children's homes. This brings with it additional complexity, with family issues being a significant and growing part of project delivery.

The project has continued to develop in a fashion that supports the participants themselves while remaining hugely parent/carer aware. As such, the project enables development of important life skills that can provide participants with a greater sense of independence. With our focus on peace-building and well-functioning governance, we are making strides to democratise our approach in this project, encouraging further involvement of participants and of their families and carers.

The knowledge and life experience evident in this project has been passed through the entire staff and volunteer team through training as well as observation learning and reflection time on session and programme delivery.

This enables the 174 Trust to provide a service in North Belfast that is experienced and person-centred, caring and challenging and that is at the heart of our community, with a growing waiting list for participation.





The Duncairn

The Duncairn Centre for Culture and Arts has been in operation for over 10 years and still continues to face challenges head on by holding on to a clear ethos and working hard to develop a body of work that is curated and co-designed with our community who endure a whole range of social issues.

It remains imperative that The Duncairn's work is something that the community is proud of and wants to be part of, and that they continue to openly and democratically engage in and shape. Every effort is made to model what we believe to be well-functioning governance, encouraging involvement in every area of our delivery.

As such, The Duncairn has established involvement processes that have enabled involvement in arts specific strategy development. The arts specific strategy sits within and aligns entirely to the 174 Trust's overarching and comprehensive intentions for the whole organisation.

The work realises our core beliefs that the arts are a significant tool to drive change, and that creativity can give people respite, inspire confidence and empowerment, self-develop, educate and encourage. This is our contribution to raising human capital, inspiring people to action in our community and wider society.

It is work that can help give the community a voice, especially to those who feel they don't have one anywhere else, and accessibility to those who perceive barriers in their lives every single day, be they financial, emotional, cultural, religious, political, real or simply perceived. We work hard to equitably use our resources and to do so in a positive manner, encouraging the acceptance of the rights of others – indeed we go further to encourage the full participation of all people in every aspect of our creative delivery.

Inclusion is at the core of what we do. Listening to our community and responding with them to address cultural and community needs in partnership with the other projects within the 174 Trust.

Our activity has encouraged diversity and inclusion, engaging diverse audiences, diverse artists and, purposefully ensuring there is diverse representation on stage.

For us, the 'giving back' process is underway. People believe us when we show them how we value their experiences, skills and opinions, and they have developed an increased sense of contribution within an organisation where they spend so much of their free time.

Our Monitoring and Evaluation

Our stakeholders, staff, volunteers and beneficiaries have helped us identify the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats which are outlined below.

Strengths

- We benefit over 65,000 people each year, many from diverse backgrounds and often from marginalised communities
- We have a passionate, skilled staff team
- We hold excellent stakeholder relationships
- We generate £1m + each year from diverse sources

Weaknesses

- Our systems of management and support
- Our internal and external communication and cohesion
- Our management of risk
- Collaborating with our community
- Visibility of our activity, inside and outside our buildings

Opportunities

- Programme for Government alignment around disability, early years and peace building
- Strategic development of all projects, particularly disability
- All Island activity, especially for the arts
- Increase financial sustainability, through fundraising and income generation

Threats

- Increasing need and polarisation
- Challenging fiscal environment
- Health and wellbeing of our team
- Age and state of our buildings
- Access to and use of technology

The information gathering exercises and analysis of the information collated has provided us with the framework that we needed to best understand our independence and interdependence, our positive attributes and, of course, the aspects we need to work on and improve.

This has been absolutely central in enabling us to consider and establish our way forward.

The Future

We have entered a period in the 2020s which has been marked by sky rocketing levels of need in our local communities, a fragile Northern Irish peace process and increasing polarisation locally and globally.

Against this challenging backdrop, our vision for the future is to continue **to support thousands of people to survive and thrive together, in North Belfast and beyond.** This vision of human flourishing and the common good, draws deeply on our Christian roots and our understanding of our shared humanity.

Within the 174 Trust we endeavour to be a community thriving together, always

learning and attempting to improve our relationships and our practice. We recognise that each of us as individuals, and our various activities and projects are independent while also being interdependent.

We are more than one person, more than one activity or one project. We enable positive impact in all manner of places and for all manner of people.

We believe that each of us can thrive with the particular support needed at a particular time and we work hard to provide the highest standards of support – independently and interdependently.





Our Intentions & Objectives



Surviving to Thriving

Every year we will support hundreds of vulnerable people to survive and thrive in the midst of challenging circumstances

We believe that everyone in our society has a place and can make a contribution to society. We commit to fostering an inclusive environment where marginalised and disadvantaged people are empowered to thrive and to make their contribution in the way that they are able.

- Strengthen our crisis services, providing the essential resources and required support to enable people to transition from surviving to thriving
- Further the development of prompt, equitable, and inclusive services, actively working to eliminate waiting lists and ensuring that every individual receives timely support tailored to their unique needs
- Encourage people to actively contribute to decision-making, ensuring their voices are heard and respected, and fostering an environment where they are partners in shaping the services and experiences that impact their lives
- Continue the development of our high-quality early childhood service, ensuring that it remains developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant and a supportive environment for all our children
- Anticipate growing service need, exploring creative options that ensure the highest quality of support for marginalised people
- Strengthen and expand our positive relationships with families and carers, providing tailored services that address their particular needs, foster further engagement and empower them as active partners.

Thriving Collaboratively

We will create mutually beneficial relationships which enable us to work and live well with each other, our stakeholders and our local communities, ensuring that we model diversity and inclusion in all we do.

We believe that much more can be achieved when working with others. By investing in strong, supportive partnerships we can share resources, expertise and experience that enables creation of effective, inclusive and creative solutions to marginalisation.

- Create and foster a culture of mutuality, collaboration and co-creation across the whole organisation, encouraging shared ownership and value
- Promote and showcase Belfast as a creative, dynamic, innovative and modern city through our work and our city, islandwide and international collaborative partnerships
- Engage our partners and participants in co-producing programmes that are relevant to the needs of our community, ensuring that all voices are heard and that solutions are effective
- Engage consistently with partners in local and national government, with financial supporters, and across Ireland and internationally, drawing on resources and expertise to address the challenges faced by people from marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds
- Further strengthen our partnerships with key organisations and stakeholders, creating a network of relationships that enhance service delivery, encourage creativity and respond to the needs of marginalised people



Thriving Creatively

We will engage our community with high quality, accessible, participatory and experiential arts provision through a curated, co-produced and diverse arts programme.

By embracing co-production, enhancing community well-being, and driving innovation in the arts sector, we can collaboratively build a more connected and inclusive creative community where everyone can thrive.

- Further develop a superior quality arts programme for North Belfast and surrounding areas
- Expand and develop the range of cultural arts programmes to inspire community development and participation in the arts throughout North Belfast
- Increase access to arts participation for all our citizens through a targeted programme and outreach initiative
- Develop, support and showcase the work and practice of new, young and emerging artists
- Respond creatively and collaboratively to unlock new opportunities and navigate challenges in delivery of our vision
- In all our work, continue the focus on relationships and reconciliation at the heart of Belfast, enabling our new communities and others to live meaningfully together



Thriving Sustainably

We will develop and deliver plans to ensure that our financial, people and facilities management is as sustainable as possible

We know that our people and spaces are central to everything positive in the 174 Trust and we believe we must do our part in response to the climate emergency. We want to inspire people that change is possible. This involves consideration of and action on waste and energy, including utilising technology.

We continue to give central focus to finance and people, recognising that without them nothing will thrive.



Our Intentions

- Model positive leadership, nurturing and empowering others to become community leaders locally and internationally
- Continue to nurture the professional development of our passionate, skilled staff and volunteer team, enabling continuation of the highest standards of delivery
- In line with best environmental responsibility practice, ensure the availability of well-designed, accessible and fully equipped spaces that meet the diverse needs of all service users, especially disabled individuals and children, providing an environment suitable for the highest standard of support
- Enhance the visibility of our activity and support, fostering greater awareness within our spaces and across the wider community
- Strengthen financial sustainability with key targets, utilising strategic and creative fundraising and realising new sustainable income generation options
- Strengthen and refine our governance, management and delivery structures, ensuring accountability, promoting inclusive practices and enhancing communication
- Assess our energy usage and invest in sustainable sources of energy and insulation, to reduce cost and our carbon footprint





174 Trust