



174 Trust

OUR COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT



www.174trust.org



Contents

- ▶ **03**
Introduction
- ▶ **05**
Our Consideration of Impact
- ▶ **06**
Our Processes
- ▶ **07**
Our Context
- ▶ **09**
Our Impact Intentions
- ▶ **10**
Our Impact Story
- ▶ **12**
Our Project Impacts
- ▶ **14**
Disability Programme
- ▶ **15**
Nurturing strengths and skills
- ▶ **17**
Enabling people with complex needs to thrive
- ▶ **19**
Providing respite for families
- ▶ **21**
Nurturing hope in families
- ▶ **23**
Helping families to have a voice
- ▶ **25**
Nursery and Preschool
- ▶ **26**
A Safe Space for children and families
- ▶ **27**
Thriving Children
- ▶ **29**
Strengthening Families
- ▶ **30**
Supporting Vulnerable Families
- ▶ **31**
Nurturing Diversity
- ▶ **32**
Excellence in delivery
- ▶ **33**
The Duncairn Centre for Culture and Arts
- ▶ **34**
Our Spaces and Partners
- ▶ **36**
Positive Community Relationships
- ▶ **37**
Surviving to Thriving
- ▶ **38**
Our Safe Spaces
- ▶ **39**
And Next?

Introduction

People from our local communities use our Arts, Disability, Nursery and tenants' programmes over 50,000 times each year

We were established as a charity in 1983, providing community focused services and activities, in an area of North Belfast which has been disproportionately impacted by the Troubles and high levels of marginalisation and deprivation.

Our successful Disability Project and Nursery have been providing much needed support for disabled people and pre-schoolers since the mid-1990s.

In 2012, we launched the Duncairn Arts Centre in a beautifully restored former Presbyterian Church. Today our Arts programme provides concerts and classes for over 8,000 people each year.

We seek to make a positive contribution to the present and future, especially supporting people experiencing high levels of deprivation and community division. The ever-progressing story of 174 Trust and of North Belfast is one where we are strengthening each other and creating cohesion between us, creating new possibilities and opportunities which contribute to the common good in North Belfast and beyond.

As the Trust moves into a new strategic period, we wanted to build upon our considerations of the impact of the full range of our community services and activities.

The over 40 years of history of 174 Trust has been bumpy, frustrating, challenging and extremely positive, exciting, and community building.

We have fortunately been able to take a little time to take stock. To hear again about what is being done for and most particularly with people in North Belfast and far beyond.

The Duncairn, our arts project, has undertaken a few impact studies in the last 5 years and continues to embed that practice in its work. This study is the first direct consideration of the impact of the full range of all our other services and activities. This includes our preschool and disability project, as well as the wide variety of impacts created by our other activities and our social orientated partners and tenants.

Hopefully you find the insights as inspiring and motivating as we have.



Our Consideration of Impact

We believe impact to be a direct and an indirect contribution to change, particularly of individual people. Although this is the first comprehensive consideration of impact across the wide range of our community services and activities, from its inception 174 Trust has been committed to ongoing evaluation of work.

We want to understand the change created and built; the potential for future positive change; how impact can be expanded and improved to influence further positive change; and how we can continue to hear about and respond to the expectations of our community.

Our next strategic period is being driven by our understanding of change and impact, driving 174 Trust to be the best organisation possible. The diverse voices across our activities and services are key as plans are developed to drive the organisation forward.

We continue to ensure that our understanding of change and impact contributes directly to our ongoing strategic development as an organisation. In support of this development, we've captured even more voices from our community, ensuring local people can be the drivers of our forward planning.

As 174 Trust moves forward with the North Belfast community, we will ensure our impact intentions remain:

- Ambitious and feasible.
- Built on our expertise, experience, creativity and community focussed ethos.
- Aligned with our vision, mission and especially our values.

Through our aims, our strategic thinking, and our relationships with the community, we will always remain focused on improving the lives of residents in North Belfast and beyond.

Our Processes

This report builds on a long history of evaluation in 174 Trust. Most especially it draws upon learnings from the impact work undertaken by The Duncairn, our arts project, from 2018.

Our approach is one based on story and people, rather than only numbers and statistics. The full impact lies in deep engagement alongside the anecdotes shared with our staff, volunteers and 174 Trust community.

We believe these impacts to be real; to be precise; and to be inspiring and motivating for everyone concerned.

Our original approach has been developed and moved forward by an Impact Analyst, a PhD qualified social anthropologist with real understanding of quantitative data use in a context founded on qualitative information.

In implementing our approach across all aspects of 174 Trust for the first time, we have used reports, letters and surveys, as well as ethnographic observations, 1-2-1 interviews, and group conversations in person and online.

We had access to reports from Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, the Education Authority and Belfast City Council and these were considered alongside surveys to parents/carers and other service users. We were also able to speak directly to representatives of three tenants; representatives of BHSC; representatives of Early Years; and representatives of EA. All of these representatives were knowledgeable about the work undertaken by 174 Trust.

The staff and volunteers were engaged formally on four separate occasions and many other times on a more informal basis. There were three meetings directly with parents/carers and numerous informal and formal observations throughout the study.

These methods gave us the widest possible range of information gathering opportunities, offering an exciting richness and depth of information.

We were able to analyse all the insights gathered, considering our impact across a whole range of factors in the delivery to and with our community.

Our Context

174 Trust is located in the heart of some of Belfast's most disadvantaged communities.

Multiple levels of deprivation

The specific area in which 174 Trust is located in North Belfast is ranked no 2 in the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017 and within our immediate catchment area are neighbourhoods such as Duncairn, Cliftonville, Newington, New Lodge, Shore Road, Tiger's Bay and Shankill which are all ranked in the top 100 of 890 areas.¹

These areas experience the highest levels of poverty in the Northern Ireland and the lifetime opportunities and quality of life of the people who live there are significantly lower than those in better off areas of our city.^{2,3}

Our locality is impacted by issues such as low mortality rate, suicide, low educational attainment, anti-social behaviour and crime/incarceration, substance abuse, one parent families, mental health issues, poor housing/homelessness. Indeed, statistics indicate that the areas in which we work has been the most troubled and underinvested areas of the city, as evidenced by the NI Statistics Research agency.⁴

Children are in need or at risk

The nursery is an essential resource in our community, with over 30% of children in North Belfast currently considered to be living in poverty, a figure increasing since 2017.⁵ This 30% figure represents some 8,400 children across North Belfast.

One particular and significant example of the difficulties in our community is the recent disclosure by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust that approximately 10% of the children in the area have been referred to them, with a particular hotspot around our locations. This means that over 2,000 children are being referred annually for input and support, most of whom are also considered to be living in poverty.

The level of need and the complexity of support required for each individual person and family, illustrates the absolutely central place of responding to deprivation and marginalisation to the purpose of 174 Trust.

Disproportionate Impact of 'The Troubles'

The legacy of the conflict has compounded the situation, creating significant life challenges for older people, children, women and those living with disabilities.

There were 577 people who died as a result of the conflict during 'The Troubles' period⁶, the second highest area in Northern Ireland. This impact and the geographical situation drove significant separation issues across North Belfast, with some 40 'peace line' barriers in existence in the area.

The area has the highest number of peace line clusters in Northern Ireland, centred on Duncairn Gardens; Limestone Road-Alexandra Park;

¹ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/files/nisra/publications/Top%20100%20SOAs.pdf>

² <https://thedetail.tv/articles/north-belfast>

³ <https://thedetail.tv/articles/poverty-in-limerick-and-north-belfast>

⁴ www.nisra.gov.uk

⁵ https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Local-indicators-of-child-poverty-after-housing-costs_2025_final.pdf

⁶ <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/sutton/tables/Location.html>

⁷ <https://www.belfastinterfaceproject.org/sites/default/files/publications/Interfaces%20PDF.pdf>

Lower Oldpark-Manor Street; Crumlin Road-Ardoyne-Glenbryn; Ligoniel; and Whitewell Road area.⁷

As an illustration of the deep and long-lasting impacts of the conflict in north Belfast, half of the barriers in North Belfast have been constructed since the ceasefires were declared in 1994 (17 out of 35 for which dates are known).

Mental ill health is prevalent

This difficult 'Troubles' period has driven a difficult context for many people in North Belfast. In the ten-year period 2013-2023, in North Belfast 223 people experienced death by suicide.⁸ This is the highest level in Northern Ireland and one of the highest in the UK.

There are inter-generational trauma impacts for many people, with the separated context of the 'Troubles' legacy adding to an ongoing sense of anxiety and stress. Coupled with the already noted high levels of poverty, particularly for children, the lack of resources and ongoing unemployment pressures, people experience high levels of mental ill-health.

1 in 4 local people have a disability

Over 25% of the North Belfast population are estimated to have a disability, yet another illustration of the essential need for the 174 Trust Disability Project.⁹

The neighbourhoods we serve suffer from a level of poverty, marginalisation and disadvantage that has led, directly and indirectly, to widespread non-activity in a whole range of community focused activities.

Recognising this difficult context, we endeavour to respond positively to the multi-faceted factors that are faced by our communities and local people.



⁸ www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/cause-death/suicide-deaths

⁹ www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/census-2021-main-statistics-health-disability-and-unpaid-care-tables

Our Impact Intentions

To create positive change in 174 Trust and in the wider community, we always work with short term and long term intent. This is intended for positive change for local people and, from 2020 to 2024, has been focused on the following aspects of life in North Belfast:

Our safe space offering

We want to provide safe and welcoming spaces that are high quality and intentionally shared by people of diverse backgrounds and experiences. These spaces are for the greater exploration and sharing of understanding of all our faiths, cultures, traditions and histories.

Building of peace

174 Trust works hard to maintain The Duncairn and The Macrory Centre as open, welcoming and transformative spaces in our city. We see these sites as central to the building of new, healthy, and positive relationships between people in North Belfast, across our city and beyond.

Restoration of hope

Hopefulness will respond to the disadvantage experienced in North Belfast, encouraging greater self-esteem and pride for our children, young people and adults. It will encourage confidence across our community, and improvements in physical and mental health and well-being.

Provision of leadership

Belfast is a city full of aspiration and inspiration. We want to bring that deeply into North Belfast, reducing social isolation and enabling engagement in a community that is transformational and positive. There is great pride in being from North Belfast and we want to enhance and promote that sense of positivity in our city.

Promotion of justice

We want to break down the barriers of marginalisation experienced by our community. Our work with people encourages development of social skills; skills that can instigate change. In tandem, we intended to enable improvement in foundational life and education skills.

Our Impact Story

In achieving our strategic goals through to end of 2024, we focussed on creating and maintaining a safe space; on restoring hope; on promoting justice, on building peace; and on providing leadership.

These are ongoing goals which ran through all our projects, achieving positive impact for every person who connected with 174 Trust or entered any of our facilities.

Our communities recognised that money matters. They understood that it makes the world go around. That it can give some a fast start in life, with opportunities to follow.

174 Trust and our surrounding communities recognise that this is not the place of everyone. Wealth also creates disadvantage and separation for others. People connected to our work and the organisation spent years working hard to challenge this imbalance while also supporting those who experience and live with this disadvantage and marginalisation.

The main 174 Trust site, The Duncairn, was previously a Presbyterian congregation and remains architecturally very visibly as an old Protestant church. This building sits in a community that has changed dramatically since the building was established.

The Duncairn is now situated in an area that is considered to have a majority culturally Catholic population, mixed with many newcomers and diverse minorities.

"I used to walk past this building. Right back to when there was no one in it. I remember thinking that this place has been left in some state by the

Presbyterians. Now look at it. I never imagined I'd cross the door and now I'm here every day. What a change!"¹⁰

Individuals crossing the threshold of the building are sometimes crossing into a world that is different to their life experience. It is overcoming barriers and building relationships simply by stepping into the space.

This is even more notable and apparent in The Macrory. It literally sits on the boundary between people and communities, with an entrance on one side and an entrance on the other. This creates excitements for those coming into contact with 174 Trust through this space. It offers newness and possibilities that can be seen beyond the walls and history of our experiences and living spaces.

In the anecdotes and stories gathered, we hear much said of the value base of 174 Trust. Values are only real if they are lived and this is the experience of people in 174 Trust.

There are of course downsides and difficulties to giving leadership and caring. It's tiring and stressful at times. It creates guilt because as much as can be achieved, it's still not everything. No matter how much we do, there's always more to do. Team members are so passionate and driven that they can be experienced as never taking a break because they care so much.

The community experience this care and commitment from the 174 Trust team. But they also worry that it's so much to give.

¹⁰ Retired female, café user



Our Project Impacts

Introduction

As we've move into our next strategic period, 174 Trust has continued to offer support, in partnership with others, that connects with individuals and families through the whole life journey. We support with childcare arrangements, nursery, disability support, our arts project in The Duncairn and outreach work into our wider community.

On our site we also support crisis intervention such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Clothes Bank, ensuring that young and old have the resources to best meet their needs as we encourage community empowerment and participation.

The range of needs in the area are wide and extensive and we endeavour to provide the supports to individuals and families, no matter their age or situation.



Our

disability

clubs



Disability Project

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

We've over forty years' experience working within North Belfast, supporting vulnerable and marginalised people with severe disabilities. We've a high level of qualification and experience across the staff and volunteer team in all projects and know this to be vital in response to the needs facing our community.

The more than 70 participants experience either a physical or learning disability and all the related issues of community exclusion. This creates particular family stress that our project responds to, offering areas of support and respite to the participants and to their families.



"The staff are amazing! The activities, food vouchers and respite were really appreciated and so welcome and made a difference to my family in every way possible.... Helping my child to make new friends, our visit to the shops to spend the vouchers allowing them to help pick good healthy food, brilliant, thank you!" ¹¹

The people involved in our disability project are from families affected by multiple issues of deprivation, an underlying and highly significant factor in North Belfast where 174 Trust operates. This is an area with some of the highest ranked areas of deprivation in Belfast and across Northern Ireland.

¹¹ Parent of disabled child, participant in summer programme 2025

Nurturing strengths and skills

In our most recent evaluation, 78% of participants were reported as having made significant progress and another 16% have started to experience progress in the following areas:

- **Improvement engaging with peers, staff and volunteers.**
- **Willingness to try new things and have greater confidence.**
- **Improvement in behaviour.**
- **Greater awareness and acceptance of their abilities, of their needs and the way they like to do things.**
- **Increased ability to follow instructions through photos and basic wording.**
- **Taking responsibility for completion of tasks (e.g. light switch offs).**

The impact of our programmes can particularly be seen with the young people we work with. The young people connected to our Disability Project are especially vulnerable as they transition from youth to adulthood at age 18. There is no requirement for an Education, Health and Care Plan in Northern Ireland so many disabled young people 'fall through the cracks'.

The 174 Trust Disability Project supports the disabled person and their family in these and other situations that arise, enabling them to find respite in the already stressful days of change. Families are able to know someone has their back; that there's a team willing and able to go the extra mile in provision of support for them, whether with reports, letters or phone-calls.

In our efforts to enable people with disabilities and their families to thrive, the project is required to be thoughtful and creative. This includes covering the following aspects and more:

- **Environment:** Participants visit local nature reserves and learn about the wildlife there. The young people help pick up litter from around the nature reserves and complete a "clean up" around the local nursing home.

- **Personal Development:** Many skills are attainable if you know where to start so we focus on some essential life skills for adults and young people with disabilities, encouraging everyone to try new things.

- **Health:** Having a healthy lifestyle is recognised as an integral part of quality of life. Life skills such as healthy eating, exercise, personal hygiene, enable people with disabilities to feel better, look better, and enhance long-term health and quality of life.

- **Personal Hygiene:** Appearance and hygiene can help boost confidence in social situations and nurture a sense of personal pride, helping our participants to feel more accepted and respected. There is a focus on encouraging and supporting daily habits such as showering, brushing teeth, using deodorant and perfume/aftershave, getting dressed and combing hair. While these may seem simple, they all significantly improve personal hygiene and confidence.

- **Eating and Cooking:** A healthy diet has many benefits. From a physical perspective, eating healthy foods creates more energy, helps maintain a healthy weight and prevents the increased risk of illness or disease later in life. We encourage a positive relationship with food and cooking from the first engagement in our project right through to our adult programme. This includes providing easy recipes in accessible formats for some of the older participants in the project.

- **Exercise:** We recognise everyone has different abilities when it comes to exercise but daily exercise can start with something as simple as a walk to the shops, or a few arm raises. Small habits can boost energy levels and over time will improve body image, strength, and wellbeing so we encourage this from childhood and especially in our young people.

- 
- **Shopping:** Shopping is a wonderful way to interact in the community, improve communication and social skills, as well as learning important life skills such as money handling. We provide opportunities at various age groups for trips to the shops alongside exercise, by walking to the local store or supermarket. When possible, we connect this with our cookery activities, making it an adventure from purchase through to eating.
 - **Hobbies:** Hobbies are a huge part of a fulfilled lifestyle and something all our participants are encouraged to partake in. We encourage our participants to know what they are enthusiastic about and encourage them to do more of it – be that art, board games or even walking and visits to the beach.
 - **Relationships and social interactions:** Relationships come in all shapes and forms – from friends, family, support workers, carers, and intimate partners – the skills required to develop meaningful relationships are diverse and challenging. We support our participants to be confident and learn at least the basic skills necessary to enable positive relationships.

Enabling people with complex needs to thrive

All of the participants in our project are referred to us by Social Services, who have identified them as having significant needs. 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 part of project delivery so that the young person with a disability might be best supported.

A parent commented that her 11 year old,

"....daughter cannot speak but got so excited each time she seen the bus at the door. She just loved being out..."¹²

It is this kind of positive impact that our participants and those on our waiting list continue to need, alongside the respite and support required by families and carers to access services, manage resources and support their loved one with disabilities.

All our project activities are relevant to the age group and the ability of the disabled person. This requires significant thought and consideration by the team to ensure that all participants are involved and learning through the various activities engaged in.

Activities are also guided by the wishes of our participants and their families and carers, with regular engagement offered to ensure we're meeting needs and enabling positive outcomes.

In one particular instance, 'C' is a 7yr old nonverbal boy with autism and severe learning disabilities. Unsurprisingly, 'C' has experienced struggles with transitioning from our bus to our afterschool's room.

The young boy could become very agitated, sometimes falling to the floor and screaming. The team spent time with 'C' and with his family to understand the specific situation and to establish some appropriate methods with the family.

These engagements enabled a sensory path to be established, allowing 'C' to jump and count the lily pads on our circuit. After the lily pads, 'C' will run his hands over our sensory board. Once 'C' has spent time on the circuit, the team show him a picture of the afterschool's room and he is much more settled to go into the room.

When 'C' is leaving to go home, the team repeat the same process with him. This relaxes him and supports his understanding of what will come next; enabling transition to the bus for a little boy who is much happier.

Establishing this routine and the positive impact for 'C', took some time. It involved engagement with 'C' and also with his family. This ensured the team had a fuller understanding of 'C', allowing the team and his family to create fun methods that have brought out a much more content little boy.

To offer one more detailed example, ChildA was aged 16 with autism and a learning disability resulting in awkwardness socially. Staff were aware that childA doesn't leave the house, with interaction only with family and school. The child spent all non-school time in their bedroom, focusing on playing video games or on iPad.

The project doesn't use these kinds of technology, so at our sessions childA would run around on his own or sit and talk to himself. When asked to sit down to take part in circle time or group discussions or activities, childA would jump up and down and start to squeal.

Over a period, a timer was introduced where staff would ask childA to sit with the other children for a short period of time and was then given time to run around freely.

¹² Parent of female young person with severe disabilities



This approach was very successful, with childA now participating freely and fully in activities with his peers. Our key sign of progress was the evening that childA hugged a member of staff, showing the first sign of affection to anyone in 11 years.

This best practice case study again shows the time and thoughtfulness given to all our participants. This value-based approach brings life change, for the disabled person in the project and for their family. The hug for a team member is such a positive action, illustrating the deep happiness and peacefulness being experienced by the child involved.

The enthusiasm of the young team in support of people with disabilities is infectious. It enables and encourages parents, carers and friends. The individual team member's ease with other people who are different to them creates joy - for the disabled person and for their family.

Providing respite for families

Our disability programme provides much needed respite for parents and carers, who often have little support.

One parent commented in one of our surveys:

*"Parents of able-bodied children look forward to summer but parents of disabled children dread the summer because they have less support daily for their child."*¹³

This kind of circumstance creates huge levels of anxiety in families and our project acts in response to these.

Parents of people involved in our disability project spoke of never having been away from their child since they were born; that they've never had space to dream, to think, to believe that something different was possible. They could not imagine being in a space without their usual concerns and anxieties.

*"I didn't know what a night off was like until the family got involved with 174 Trust. Going shopping or to a café made me worry about what would happen so we'd all just put the idea out of our minds."*¹⁴

The key to this is that parents and carers have learnt to trust our staff team with their family member. One parent said:

*"If I ask people to hand over a phone they'd say no. Or give me your credit card - you'd say no. Well, I'm giving up my child. That's how serious this is. But they've helped me to trust so much that my daughter just wants to stay longer. We're all part of the 174 Trust family now."*¹⁵

Another parent said

*"I know my daughter is safe and in good hands. I never have to worry."*¹⁶

This trust gives carers space and time to do other things in their lives.

*"I can't believe that I can let go. That I've learned to take a break and let someone else have my child. I can have a breath."*¹⁷



¹³ Parent of female young person with severe disabilities

¹⁴ Parent of male young adult with severe disabilities

¹⁵ Parent of male young adult with severe disabilities

¹⁶ Parent of female young adult with severe disabilities

¹⁷ Parent of young adult with severe disabilities

Some of the specific issues affecting families and people with disabilities in north Belfast are:

- Daily pressures related to their physical or learning disability, sensory loss, challenging behaviour, and a combination of all three.
- Difficulties relating to inclusion causing personal development issues, stigma and insufficient relationships with others.
- General family stress, with struggles accessing services, low income, and poor living conditions. There are many life changing events in the life of a person with disabilities, with various support opportunities changing and in some instances disappearing altogether.
- In some cases, adults in our project have had periods of no interaction with their peers while children, young people and young adults are regularly affected by less social interaction with their peers, thereby increasing risks of low self-esteem and low motivation.

In our recent survey, 100% of our families reported benefiting from the respite we provided. As we focus on our intention to help families to survive and thrive, stories are told of the first visit to 174 Trust for many parents and families of those with disabilities. These stories convey the stress and concern raised with having children with disabilities and how to 'let go' of some of their anxieties.

Those adults are given respite, short as it may be in some cases. They are given space to have a coffee, to go to a shop, to go for a walk in the park. These are life giving ventures. Stress releasing opportunities that are improving mental and physical health for adults in our community.

*"The summer programme was vital to me. It gave me quality time and attention to my other child. I love that my son who attends the 174 has made great connections and friends his own age."*¹⁸

Often community service is devalued. Considered less than other work ongoing across our society.

Yet all of the work related to 174 Trust is of vital importance to the children, families, parents and partners involved. The place of 174 Trust in the life story of people should not be underestimated or understated.

Parents come to 174 Trust and leave children and young people in the care of our team. Parents come and leave their children with disabilities – many, many with severe disabilities – in our care. The space given to those people is life-changing for the child and young person as well as for the parent and families.

*"I know my daughter is safe and in good hands. I never have to worry."*¹⁹

¹⁸ Parent of disabled child, participant in summer programme 2025

¹⁹ Parent of female young adult with severe disabilities

Nurturing hope in families

With the unwavering support of the 174 Trust team, families find themselves experiencing a new sense of freedom, one that allows them to envision possibilities they hadn't thought possible before. The weight of uncertainty the families experienced have started to lift and, in its place, a sense of hope and empowerment takes root.

Families begin to feel that the impossible is, in fact, within reach. Through the guidance and encouragement of the 174 Trust team, parents no longer feel like they are alone as they navigate the complexities of caring for a person with disabilities. Instead, they have experienced 174 Trust as a team that is ready to offer help, guidance, and understanding every step of the way.

"My daughter looks forward to 174 on a Mon evening, it is the only social event that she attends during the full week, so it's very important to her to mix with others. She loves her club!

*Thank you 174."*²⁰

This has created a space where progress is not just an aspiration but a tangible reality—especially for parents of children with disabilities, who may have previously felt isolated in their struggles.

Isolation is a factor for many parents of disabled children. This isolation is however greater in the context of a single parent. One of our young adults with particularly complex needs, including being very physical and overly aggressive, is cared for by a foster mum who supported the young man on her own.

In choosing to foster the young man, the wider family had been questioning of this. They recognised that the young man was going to require a significant level of care. The young man's foster parent chose to provide this care, while the wider family took a step back.

This isolation was responded to by 174 Trust, offering general support and particular respite to the foster mum. This young man continues to

access support from the Disability Project, appreciating the routine and engagement of the team. And the young man's foster mother is able to receive space to relax and breath for a few hours per week.

As in this instance and for many other parents, this support transforms their perspective on what's possible. Families begin to realise that change, however small, is achievable—whether it's a new skill, a breakthrough in communication, or a step toward greater independence. This belief is deeply empowering, shifting the narrative from one of limitation to one of potential.

These small changes create benefits that ripple out to the entire family dynamic. The space that is created for parents, through the support of the team, allows them to step back and breathe. With small breaks and a little less stress in the home, other relationships have become more harmonious, and the everyday challenges of family life feel more manageable. The emotional burden is lightened, making room for connection, laughter, and shared joy.

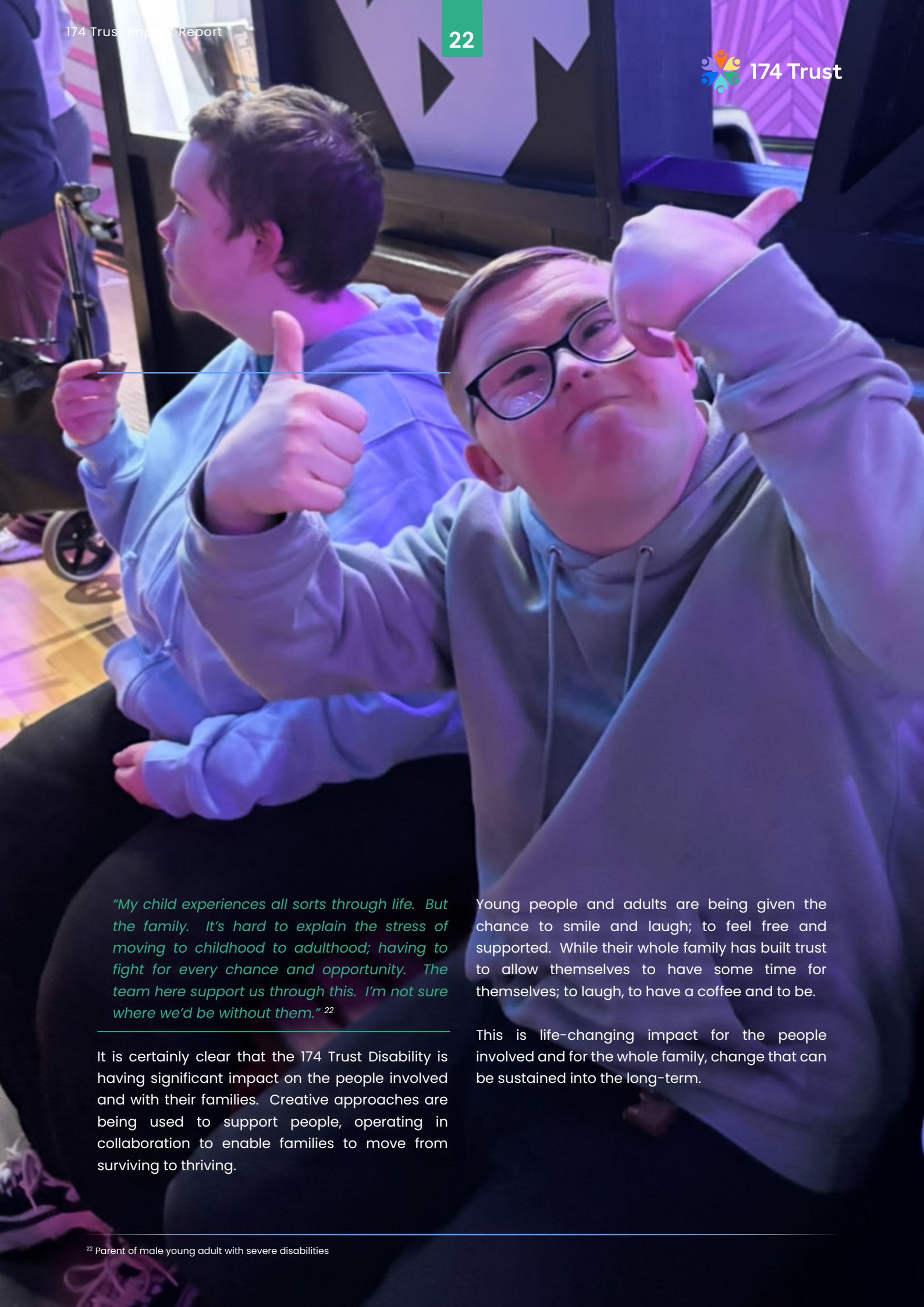
*"Now we have a future. I was overwhelmed. Now I've confidence to let go. Our family has a chance to look forward."*²¹

These words capture the essence of the journey many families experience. What was once overwhelming and uncertain now feels like a path of possibility. Involvement with the Disability Project enables whole families to begin to look toward the future with renewed hope and excitement. It's a journey of reclaiming confidence, of rediscovering what it means to dream, and of realising that together, they can overcome the obstacles that once seemed insurmountable.

This transformation isn't just about the person with disabilities – it's about the entire family reclaiming a sense of stability, balance, and possibility, where everyone is empowered to thrive.

²⁰ Parent of female young adult with severe disabilities

²¹ Parent of female young person with severe disabilities

A photograph of two young people, likely of South Asian descent, sitting and giving thumbs up. The person in the foreground is wearing glasses and a grey hoodie, while the person behind them is wearing a blue hoodie. They are in a room with colorful, abstract wall art.

"My child experiences all sorts through life. But the family. It's hard to explain the stress of moving to childhood to adulthood; having to fight for every chance and opportunity. The team here support us through this. I'm not sure where we'd be without them." ²²

It is certainly clear that the 174 Trust Disability is having significant impact on the people involved and with their families. Creative approaches are being used to support people, operating in collaboration to enable families to move from surviving to thriving.

Young people and adults are being given the chance to smile and laugh; to feel free and supported. While their whole family has built trust to allow themselves to have some time for themselves; to laugh, to have a coffee and to be.

This is life-changing impact for the people involved and for the whole family, change that can be sustained into the long-term.

²² Parent of male young adult with severe disabilities

Helping families to have a voice

Our team regularly support family members to access services. . Staff and volunteers have supported parents and carers with calls to doctors and Health Visitors. This was noted as something that gave a parent confidence to speak for themselves in future calls.

We build confidence and independence for people, enabling them to respond to their own experiences of injustice. Families see the improvements in communication, listening, sitting etc. every day and know such joy from these experiences.

Within this programme, one of our members, Melanie, has a severe learning disability. However, Melanie's older sister, who also participates in our programme, also has a severe learning disability as does her mother.

During this past year we have helped the family secure a habitable home and have provided crisis support by way of food and hygiene parcels. When 'M' first joined our programme she was socially awkward. Staff were aware that the family didn't leave the house apart from school and there was no other interaction with people outside the family.

'M' remained very quiet, shy, scared to speak up or make her presence known. She had little confidence and very few independent life skills, with poor personal hygiene, cookery skills, or ability to form relationships.

Despite the fact that all other programme members also have a disability, there is a real sense of pressure on 'M' because she understands her family – especially her mum – are different than others.

Since she has been involved in our Disability Programme, 'M' has acquired a good level of cookery skill. She was provided with a designated team worker who understood her needs. As a result of this relationship all information was provided in easy to read or picture format, and all recipes and ingredients were sent home with 'M'.

While 'M' herself has been hugely excited by her new skills, the cooking learned has improved the food situation and diet in the home. The designated team member also recognised 'M' hygiene and health needs. The team member was able to create discussions that helped Melanie to understand how to care for hair, teeth and nails.

More deeply, the team member was able to support 'M' as she grasped the need to recognise body and mood changes at the time of period. 'M' was able to begin a process of using the correct sanitary products and experienced great change in her social situation.

She is now able to engage and interact with others and has gained new skills and knowledge for day-to-day life.

This experience and knowledge has been taken into her home, transforming the family relationships and the situation there. 'M' is now able to present herself as happy and content and maintains a highly beneficial relationship with her designated team member. The changes seen have impacted on 'M' and, perhaps most significantly, her family situation has been transformed by her individual positive progress.



Our

nursery

Nursery and Preschool

Since its founding in 1995, the nursery and preschool has been an integral part of 174 Trust's family work. We address the play and education needs of children in and around the North Belfast area. The hope for every child who goes through the 174 Trust Nursery is that they leave with a keen desire to learn, the 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.

With similarities to the Disability Project, parents and carers were very aware of the time taken to build relationships with children in the nursery and preschool. Parents understand this trust to be key to the development opportunities that then grow with their children.

Stories told of the first visit to 174 Trust convey the deep vulnerability that comes with placing your trust in someone else, especially when it involves

your child. For many parents, the initial days of preschool and nursery were marked by emotional impacts –an internal struggle of excitement, hopefulness, doubt and separation.

*"I have watched my daughter develop and grow throughout this year, teachers are all fantastic and ***** has enjoyed going to school every day after she settled. She constantly talks about the school and had a very happy & nourishing experience."*²³

Leaving behind their child, the most cherished part of their lives, felt almost unimaginable for some. Parents described making multiple visits to 174 Trust before they could even consider walking away, each visit a small step toward building confidence in the staff and the environment. The positive impact of the staff team was repeated again and again by parents and carers, noting their patience with them and the joy they offered to their child.



²³ Parent of female child in nursery

A Safe Space for children and families

Parents spoke of remaining close, waiting in the car just outside the building, hearts heavy, eyes fixed on the building, not quite ready to drive away. The thought that someone else could be trusted to care for their child, to hold their child's wellbeing with the same tenderness and vigilance, seemed distant.

And yet, over time, through consistent care and genuine relationships, that trust with 174 Trust took root to the point where people described themselves as part of the 174 Trust family.

Our project supports people in all manner of ways. While our obvious focus is on the child, we are able to confidently engage in support to families and to the wider community.

Families in North Belfast are not just surviving—they are finding ways to thrive in a community that, despite its challenges, offers hope and opportunity.

With 174 Trust families were able to recognise that life is about more than just making it through the day. It's about creating a space where every member of the family, especially the children, have a chance to flourish and thrive. Every day brings new experiences—small, yet significant moments that stretch horizons and enrich lives.

The children are introduced to opportunities that may have seemed out of reach before, allowing them to discover new interests, build confidence, and form friendships that will last a lifetime. These experiences go beyond the classroom.

They're about building resilience, curiosity, and a sense of belonging. Families are learning to break old patterns and create new habits—habits that foster growth, creativity, and a deeper understanding of the world around them. With each new opportunity, the children's minds are expanding and their worldviews are shifting.

Their futures are opening up in ways that parents previously thought unimaginable. It's a journey of transformation, not just for the children, but for the entire family as they navigate a path toward brighter possibilities, one step at a time.

"I couldn't be happier with the care and support she has received. All the staff are absolutely fantastic – warm, attentive, and clearly dedicated to the children's development and wellbeing. It's been a joy to see her thrive in such a positive and nurturing environment." ²⁴



²⁴ Parent of female child in nursery

Thriving Children

In our preschool and nursery, every child is treated as an individual, with their own unique pace of learning and personal development. Time is taken to truly understand each child's needs, allowing them to grow in an environment that is both nurturing and responsive to who they are. Families spoke with real joy and pride about the moment they first witness their children begin to improve communication, speaking more clearly and expressing themselves more fully as children.

This can mark the beginning of a child's journey toward understanding and being understood, a process that for some families went well beyond words.

For many parents, watching their son or daughter start to communicate in this way is an emotional milestone—a moment of breakthrough that fills them with hope for what's to come. As these children continue to develop, this early communication often blossoms into more complex forms of expression.

The children, with the support of their families, go on to develop their speech and language skills in remarkable ways, building the foundation for richer, more meaningful connections with the friends and the family around them.

*"The learning my child gained with the stories, the words, the speaking. They're young but this foundation will serve them a life time. I really believe what they've gained will help them navigate life."*²⁵

Families watch with pride as their children begin to form new and additional words, string sentences together, and share their thoughts and feelings. It's a gradual, often awe-inspiring process that brings a deep sense of fulfilment to parents, knowing their children are not just growing physically, but are also learning to navigate and engage with the world through communication.

This process of development, which starts with small, seemingly simple gestures, is a testament to the power of the work in the preschool and nursery. It's notable that parents saw an environment where their child can take their first steps toward self-expression, at their own pace, and with all the support they need to thrive.

Preschool children are now entering a system often unable to go to the toilet independently or to clean their teeth. Books have not been held in the hand. The team are responding to all these situations and more.

The created stress and anger in parents, carers and children becomes another barrier to learning and development. The calmness in approach in 174 Trust overcomes many of these difficulties.

Parents and carers joy at seeing progress for their child. Seeing that a child's anger does not result in expulsion. Knowing that their child has learned to accept affection in a hug or to give a kiss.

*"It's the soft changes that make the biggest difference. With the relaxation from this team, I can kiss my child. Something I've never been able to do before."*²⁶

174 Trust staff are seen working quietly and calmly; offering care to those who need it most; modelling love for those on the edges of our community; and encouraging families and carers to participate. The team are recognised as supporting children to thrive – emotionally, mentally and physically.

The family impacts for the apparent small actions that are enabling children to thrive is immeasurable.

Individuals and families are supported at various points on the life journey, often beginning in the preschool and nursery setting. This includes toileting and teeth cleaning for children; cooking and independent living for young adults; calm and active response to difficulties experienced by people with disabilities; communication to and within families.

²⁵ Parent of preschool child, survey response 2025

²⁶ Parent of young adult with severe disabilities

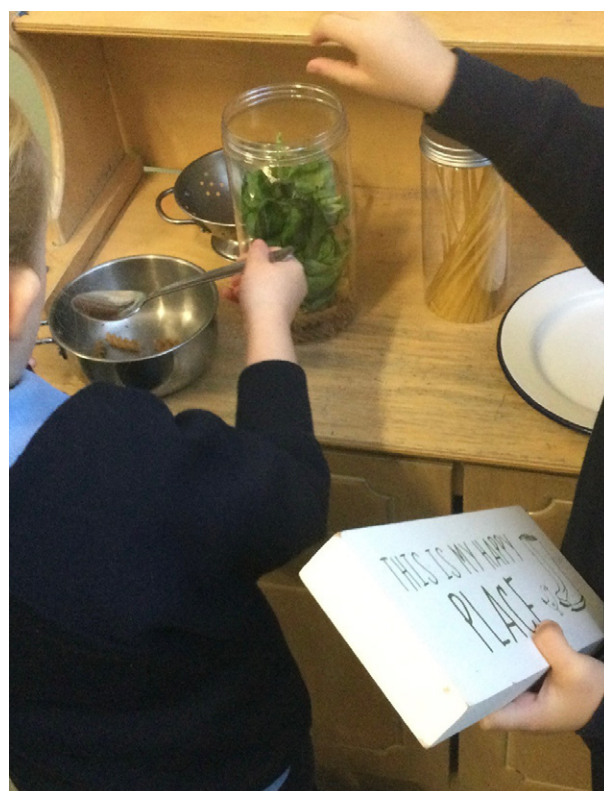
This pushing of boundaries structurally, socially and individually is central to methodologies utilised by the 174 Trust team. This is about helping people to recognise that individually and collectively they can do more; while still challenging society to create the space and pathways for people to realise their true potential and thrive in our society.

The story of play is a key influencer of impact. The openness created by playing with some train tracks, with a child creating some flat runs. And a parent watching this grow to include ramps and then bridges and then stories with platforms and train crashes. A parent seeing their child exploring and imagining for the first time, primarily due to the experience being gained at 174 Trust that has enabled their child to mentally thrive.

*"The excitement of my child building a bridge for the first time. And then creating a story with a fire engine after a train crash. Such a joy. Really helped me to see that there are possibilities; that there is a chance that my son can do good things in life."*²⁷

This type of journey and observation has created motivation to offer other new opportunities within families. Children taken to the park because parents were no longer afraid of what might happen or how their child will act. Children taken to the library because of the joy seen when a story is read. Children getting fully dressed independently before coming downstairs to see parents in the morning after learning new things at 174 Trust.

The changes happening for children, young people, and adults are not just transformative—they're sparking a shift in everyday life that's fostering new, positive behaviours.



²⁷ Parent of young male, preschool

Strengthening Families

It's evident in the way families interact with one another, in the simple yet meaningful conversations that now take place around the dinner table or during quiet moments at home. Conversations that were once perhaps routine or strained are now filled with more openness, more connection, and more shared joy.

"I can see the impact of 174 Trust in everything in our home!"²⁸

Even something as seemingly mundane, or oftentimes extremely stressful, as a trip to the supermarket has become a cherished family outing, a chance to bond, to make decisions together, and to share in the little moments that often go unnoticed. These outings have a new sense of purpose, bringing the family closer through small acts of cooperation and togetherness.

"The extracurricular activities offered this year were of interest and value to my child. The Farm Visit was definitely a highlight – he talked about it excitedly for days and clearly enjoyed the hands-on experience. Activities like that really help bring learning to life and allow children to connect with the world around them in a meaningful way. I appreciate the variety of experiences provided."²⁹

Healthier eating habits have also become a focal point—families are taking the time to make better food choices, cooking meals together, and exploring new, nutritious recipes.

These shared experiences are not only improving physical health but are also encouraging a sense of accomplishment and teamwork within the family.

And then there's the play—the physical, energetic play that has found its way back into family routines. Whether it's a game of football in the park or a dance-off in the living room, these moments of fun are reinvigorating the home environment, creating an atmosphere of joy and spontaneity that hadn't always been there before.

All of these shifts, these small yet meaningful changes, are creating a ripple effect—pleasure, connection, and well-being are making their way into homes, fostering new ideas, fresh routines, and deeper bonds.

Families are benefiting in ways that are found within the nursery and the related family support but go well beyond 174 Trust. Children and families have been able to discover new togetherness and shared experiences. And these new rhythms aren't just enriching individual homes; they're radiating outward, influencing the broader community.

They have enabled some parents and children to take up new activities in the community, sometimes together and other times alone but with renewed confidence and positivity.

One grandparent spoke of being able to go to a knitting group and a singing group now that children are in nursery. This took time, waiting for the child to settle and begin to thrive before they entered into their own new experiences with renewed excitement for life.

²⁸ Grandparent of young female, preschool

²⁹ Parent of preschool child, survey response 2025

Supporting Vulnerable Families

Our project supports people in all manner of ways. While our obvious focus is on the child, we are able to confidently engage in support to families and to the wider community.

While listening and understanding the impact of our work, we became aware of a young parent that the nursery team had been supporting. The team had become concerned for the young parent's well-being as they built a relationship with her when she brought her child to the nursery.

It was evident that she was facing some challenges, and through gentle conversation and ongoing engagement, our team began to understand the depth of her situation.

The young mother shared how she had recently lost her job, placing her under significant financial strain. This financial pressure had a ripple effect, leading to feelings of isolation and disconnection from her community.

Recognising the complexity of her situation, 174 Trust stepped in to offer meaningful and practical support. We were able to provide immediate assistance through our foodbank and clothing bank, ensuring that she and her child had access to essential items during a difficult period.

At the same time, our Arts Outreach Officer reached out and encouraged her to get involved in our arts programme – a space that not only offered creative expression but also helped rebuild her confidence and sense of belonging.

Over the course of several weeks, with continued support and encouragement, this young woman began to regain stability in her life. The combination of practical aid and emotional support proved transformative. She gradually rebalanced her circumstances, regained her self-esteem, and eventually secured new employment.

Her journey is a testament to the power of community support, and a reminder of how small, compassionate actions can lead to life-changing outcomes. Central to our strategy, our team were able to support this family to move forward from surviving to thriving; to provide support collaboratively; and to enable this young parent to engage with creativity.

174 Trust is noted as working with many families and individuals on low – and sometimes no – income. The support offered is of the highest quality. No person is turned away on the basis of financial capability. They are supported and related to because they are valued and this value is experienced by people who come across our door.

There is real recognition of the stress and anxiety of poverty and disadvantage. Families know this anxiousness and greatly value 174 Trust's efforts to be a significant part of breaking this cycle.



Nurturing Diversity

The 174 Trust team focus on encouraging and enabling new relationships. This is founded on principles of engagement, especially around play and fun. Of course, there is learning in playing – understanding colours with buttons; motor skills with sand and playdough – and at the heart of it all is people experiencing each other as friends and equals.

Working class, middle class, whatever class. Considered disadvantaged or not. In work or out of work. Newcomer, asylum seeker or from settled background. Catholic, Protestant or other. Children share their interests and stories. Parents and carers share their stories. And friendships are established and grow.

One family of asylum seekers have been in five different countries. They couldn't believe the investment that was given to their child and to their family by 174 Trust. They knew support for the first time in years and in a manner that made them believe that they had a home, a community and that they had a chance to thrive rather than only survive.

174 Trust is reducing barriers and enabling the community to experience each other in new ways. These strong, positive connections are creating integrations that will last long into the future, establishing community in new ways in North Belfast.

The impact of the nursery and preschool cannot be underestimated. It is wide ranging and expected to be long term. It raises aspirations for all the children, maximising the possibilities for their futures. And this is achieved alongside families, offering them the support they require to provide the most beneficial circumstances for their own futures.

Every person spoken to in this short study spoke so highly of the team and of the service provided. They could all speak of the positive impacts – in thriving, in relationship, in play and creativity – that the nursery has had on their children and on the family.

And perhaps the greatest sign of the hugely positive impact is every parent, grandparent and carer would positively recommend the preschool and nursery to anyone!





Our clothes bank

Our clothes bank

Government bodies through to parents and carers and children all note the person-centred, welcoming and well-equipped environments we hold in our buildings.

*"Care is observably of a high standard."*³⁰

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust consider service provision to ensure:

- Quality of Care;
- Quality of Staffing, Management and Leadership;
- Quality of the Physical Environment;
- Quality of Monitoring and Evaluation.

In all areas 174 Trust was noted as operating at a high standard. These four Quality Areas and the high standard of delivery by 174 Trust are what provides the best context for positive impact for children and for their families.

*"We have been more than happy with 174 for our child. The staff are friendly, welcoming and approachable. She has loved going every day from the beginning."*³¹

174 Trust is recognised as having the people, the setting and the procedures in place to fully meet the children's needs effectively with the, "...ability to provide warm and consistent care which promotes children's development."³²

The environment is considered to be child centred, welcoming and well equipped, providing the resources need to support the children's development. There is consistent communication with parents, enabling them to remain confident about the care and support offered to the child.

The staff are noted as caring for the children, recognising that, "...the atmosphere was fun with the sound of the children chatting and playing well together."³³

This playing well together is particularly important for 174 Trust, providing foundations for children to build positive relationships hopefully throughout childhood and well beyond.

These foundations are driven by good management, training and systems but, most especially, by a set of values that align with the whole of 174 Trust and a focus on working together as a team, with the children and with families.

All the feedback given by children themselves was very positive, showing their own happiness and contentment at 174.

These high standards show the value and care that 174 Trust has for everyone connected to our services and activity. It shows our focus and planning on all areas of personal development, especially for preschool children.

It is this pursuit of excellence in all things that provides the context in which children and their families are supported to grow and to thrive.

³⁰ Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Sessional and Full Day Care Inspection Report 2024
³¹ Parent of preschool child, BHSC inspection response 2024

³² Page 13, BHSC, Quality of Staffing, Management & Leadership Inspection Report
³³ Page 14, BHSC, Quality of Staffing, Management & Leadership Inspection Report

Surviving to Thriving

Alongside our core Disability, Nursery and Arts activities, 174 Trust respond to need as this arises. There is rarely a day when someone new, with different requirements, doesn't enter our building.

Over time this has meant ensuring partners, such as AA and other addiction services, are on our site and that we support them financially and in any other way possible to ensure their services are available.

In other instances, we establish other necessary services. This previously included a Foodbank and now we maintain a volunteer led Clothes Bank.

We're currently provide clothes to over 2,000 people each year. Examples of the people we've supported include

- Hundreds of homeless people, through our partnership with The People's Kitchen.
- A local school asked us to provide school shoes for a child who could not start school without them.
- An in-patient in the Mater walked to our clothes bank to get clothes.
- We provided clothes, nappies and baby food for 4 babies including a two week old baby boy.
- Clothes for 3 children who were rehomed by Social Services

We've also been able to partner with other health care providers in association with the Clothes Bank, offering health support to those most vulnerable in our community.

These engagements are the first effort for many people to respond to their own need to survive. They have taken a difficult first step to cross a threshold and ask for help. And with the support offered and new relationships created, people are shown that they are valued and have an opportunity to thrive.

As with our employed teams in the Disability Project and Nursery, the impact on the women who volunteer in our Clothes Bank cannot be understated. They have formed new, exciting relationships that are a clear response to the sense of isolation being experienced in our community.

The women have been able to meet other people with similar values; people with whom they can build a real sense of belonging and strong social ties.

The laughter and joy shown by the women has boosted self-esteem and enabled vulnerable people to experience hopefulness, sometimes for the first time in a very long time.

Volunteering has been shown to reduce stress and improve mental health, providing positive distractions and a sense of achievement in helping others.³⁶ This positivity is so obvious and infectious every time you're with or even pass by the women volunteers at work.



³⁶ Social Science and Medicine (2009); Volunteering and health: The role of social network change

The Duncairn Centre for Culture and Arts 34

Our arts centre has been operating for over a decade, consistently facing challenges with resilience and a clear, community-driven ethos. The work is co-designed with those living in the area, many who have experienced a wide range of social issues.

We are committed to ensuring that the Duncairn remains a space the community is proud of—one they feel ownership of. We strive to model strong, transparent governance and create opportunities for meaningful involvement in our work, including the development of an arts-specific strategy that aligns fully with 174 Trust's wider organisational vision.

At the heart of our approach is a belief in the transformative power of the arts—to inspire confidence, provide respite, educate, and empower. Our efforts aim to give a voice to those who feel unheard, fostering participation and representation across all areas of creative delivery. By listening and responding to our community in partnership with other 174 Trust projects, we've managed to nurture values of diversity and encourage genuine contribution. People recognise their voices matter here, and as a result, many have found renewed purpose and a deeper connection through their involvement.

The Duncairn Centre for Culture & Arts has had a truly transformative impact for North Belfast. It's not an exaggeration to also claim that this impact has been felt city-wide over the past 10 years.

The Duncairn's music content and arts/crafts classes are second-to-none with many local people getting access to the arts in a seemingly effortless way (it's goes without saying that the effort required is much more than it seems). However, they go much further in that they create a true 'community' with their audiences, inspire additional artistic endeavour and invite creative ideas for other artistic activities.

The impact of the Duncairn over the past 10 years hasn't gone unnoticed in the local community. This impact goes beyond the direct changes brought about participation and engagement with the Duncairn activities. The Duncairn presence and actions in North Belfast have helped shape the area and the community living there.

Since opening its doors, the Duncairn has put tremendous effort into shaping the local arts sector into a sustainable ecosystem, where organisations form long-lasting partnerships to achieve long-term impact. Many organisations that the Duncairn has been working with recognise the importance of this sectoral goal and share a similar ethos in approaching issues of sustainability, resilience, and longevity of the sector.



Our tenants and partners

We believe wholeheartedly in the possibility of change in collaboration with others. The ethos of 174 Trust is fully focused on relations with others, sharing information and resources to best enable positive change in our community and wider society.

174 Trust tackle's marginalisation, endeavouring to create a more Equitable distribution of resources. This is achieved 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, through our tenants, support a range of services for vulnerable people.

Our Nursery, Disability project, and Arts Centre actively support people from marginalised communities to access services and participate in wider society.

Our two buildings host a wide diversity of other projects and activities, all focused on positive community benefit. This currently includes:

- An Irish language nursery
- Two boxing clubs
- A community café
- Home for four start up, arts based businesses
- Offices and delivery space for peacebuilding, health and community development organisations
- Support space for addiction recovery groups who meet with us on a daily basis

A unique feature of the 174 Trust is our collaborative partnerships with a range of groups across the city as well as those who are based at the Duncairn Complex to enhance community relations. These include groups and organisations as diverse as (non exhaustive list): Aspergers Support, Belfast Amateur Boxing, Belfast Interface Project, Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain, Charter NI, Community Dialogue, Corrymeela, Intercomm, local AA and Al-Anon groups, North Belfast Partnership, NI Community Faiths' Forum, Playhouse Derry, Skainos, Saturday Nite Seniors Social, New Lodge Arts, Tides Training, Verbal Arts Centre Derry.



Positive Community Relationships

In 2019, we bought the Macrory hall, 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.

The programmes now established by 'Building Bridges' at Macrory includes over 120 young members, with around 1/3 from the Protestant community and the remainder from the Catholic community. This safe space is enabling people from opposite sides of the Macrory to engage meaningful in a way that is already impacting positively in the wider community.

The engagement with each other and with the local police for the first time has brought notable reductions in summer unease in the area.

There's always something you can help each person with, especially the kids. You've got to spend the time with them to understand their lives.³⁵

The focus on the boxing has led to engagement with mothers and this has led on to the establishment of other positive activity in the building. There is now a twice weekly support group for people with addictions, a 'Uniform Swap Shop', a women's group and new volunteers supporting the activities. Some of these volunteers have been first aid trained and others completed Youth Work qualifications, some of the first qualifications achieved.

Participants have been able to support each other with food, cooking and baking. This has included provision of food to older people in the community, establishing a safe place where people are growing a community hub that responds to the high level of need in a disadvantaged and marginalised community.



³⁵ Project Leader, Building Bridges

Our Safe Spaces

Adults come and relax, chat and are given space to do so. Others in a place of greater need access addiction support, clothing, food or advice. All state the importance of the welcome, of being valued and of being cared for. These opportunities are life-changing and have been experienced and described as such.

In and of themselves, the safe and welcoming space of The Duncairn and The Macrory are a gift to North Belfast. The spaces themselves, especially The Duncairn, facilitate conversation and relationship. This is within families as well as across families and the diversity of our community.

North Belfast and Northern Ireland as a whole is changing dramatically. These changes are not always straightforward yet everyone connected to 174 Trust experiences the diversity without anxiety and with a real sense of value of 'The Other'.

Differences are notable and often obvious. These were positive differences; exciting differences. The differences experienced are in a context of commonality of disadvantage and other social struggles. This acts as a motivator for people, encouraging them to continue striving and moving forward.

Outside of the core services and activities, the joy of a child and grandparent was explored as they recognised that they couldn't understand a single other conversation in the café of a morning. The ethnicities, languages and abilities held such a variety that they noted:

*'My English speaking and my white skin is surrounded by all these differences and everyone still feels safe here.'*³⁷

It was obvious that the child and grandparent were excited about the safe place and the exploration it offered. It gave a grandparent opportunity to explore the 'big world outside North Belfast' with a young child; to explore possibilities, culture, travel, opportunities.

It offered a place of safety and peace in an area riven with division and still dealing with the negative impacts of our troubled history.

The café is at the centre of The Duncairn and is as such is a central part of the impact story of 174 Trust. It provides natural space for people to connect and overcome boundaries. To reach across Belfast's many divides and create hope. It offers social opportunities for parents and families; for people to observe others and experience a degree of independence and peace.

There is a notable uniqueness in the offering of 174 Trust and this brings particular and special impacts. Access to the building may be driven by acute need and crisis; the welcome offered can open doors to a preschool; to a boxing club; to a conversation; to arts events and activities.

All of this welcome is experienced as the first part of encouraging hope. Children are encouraged and enabled to know that things are possible; adults are given space to survive and to see that there are opportunities to thrive.

³⁷ Grandparent from local community

And Next?

There is still much to do and much to learn.

There is no doubt that 174 Trust has been able to impact well – with children; with people with disabilities; with families and carers; and with the wider community. But there remains much to do to create the thriving society that values every individual.

As we moved through 2024 we revisited our strategic intentions, spending time working with staff, volunteers, stakeholders and beneficiaries to help co-create a new strategy for 2025 – 2028.

In doing so, we have drawn deeply on our inspirational founding story, evaluated our current operations and context, and developed a new strategy. We believe this strategy will enable us to contribute positively to the well-being of communities in North Belfast now and into the future.

We will continue to support thousands of people to survive and thrive together, in North Belfast and beyond.

To support working towards this stated vision of people in North Belfast and beyond led us to establish a set of strategic pillars for 2025 – 2028.

Surviving to Thriving

Every year our Nursery, Disability and Crisis Support Projects 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 in our society. We commit to fostering an inclusive environment where marginalised and disadvantaged people, especially children and people with disabilities, are empowered to thrive and to make their contribution in the way that they are able.

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.

Thriving Creatively

We'll engage our community with high quality, accessible, participator 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.

Thriving Sustainably

We'll 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 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.

To achieve our vision and our entire strategy from 2025, we will outwork a set of five core values:



Collaboration – we work ‘with’ and alongside individuals, communities and partners to unlock new possibilities and opportunities in response to marginalisation.



welcome, and build relationships between, people from diverse communities, particularly those who have experienced marginalisation.



Creativity – we support and encourage each other to nurture creative talent and utilise innovative ways to respond to challenge.



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.



Hope – we believe that positive change can happen and we encourage this change in our action.

- **Inclusion** – we actively seek to

While our work has many, 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.

174 Trust moves into a new strategic period with the same fervour and enthusiasm; the same desire to support people as we all survive and thrive together.

We will continue to improve our evaluation and impact methodology processes, building approaches that we can replicate and test across our whole organisation.

We will continue to lead in North Belfast, building and growing the pride that we have from working and living in a positive part of our great city.





174 Trust

Address:
Duncairn Complex
Duncairn Avenue
Belfast BT14 6BP

Telephone: 028 (90) 747 114
Email: reception@174trust.org
Website: www.174trust.org