



Macaulay Associates Network Ltd
CREATING POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE

Evaluation of Forthspring's Pilot Volunteer Programme

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Evaluation of the current volunteering programme of Forthspring Inter-Community Group

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1 Introduction

This is a report on the evaluation of the current pilot Volunteering Programme of Forthspring Inter-Community Group.

Volunteers have played a central role in Forthspring since it was established in West Belfast in 1997. However, this pilot programme has allowed for a full time member of staff to be appointed to co-ordinate, support and develop volunteering to a new level.

Independent evaluators, Macaulay Associates, carried out the evaluation between November 2008 and January 2009.

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the progress of the Volunteering Programme against its intended aims and to make recommendations for the future of volunteering within Forthspring.

The evaluation was funded by the Transform Initiative of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI).

The report presents the findings of the evaluation including:

- An executive summary of the conclusions and recommendations
- A description of the background to the project
- An explanation of the evaluation methodology
- A presentation of the main findings and conclusions of the evaluation
- A series of recommendations for the future based on the findings
- A set of associated appendices

2 Executive Summary

This is a report on the evaluation of the current Volunteering Programme of Forthspring Inter-Community Group that was carried out between November 2008 and January 2009.

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the progress of the Volunteering Programme against its intended aims and to make recommendations for the future of volunteering within Forthspring.

The main conclusions of the evaluation were:

- 1) The Volunteer Programme was effective in supporting local community members to become active in their communities as volunteers. Forthspring supported 20-30 volunteers per quarter to become active in areas such as youth work, play work, older peoples' work, community organisation governance, mentoring international volunteers, administration, working in the community café, caretaking and building maintenance.
- 2) The majority of volunteers were women, not in paid employment and living in North/West Belfast.
- 3) The Volunteer Programme is vital for Forthspring and provides a valuable resource in an area of high social deprivation with a legacy of conflict. The unique environment in which Forthspring operates and the complexities and sensitivities of the divided communities make this area of work extremely challenging, and there is a need for sustained community interventions of this kind.
- 4) There is a need to recruit more local volunteers from the immediate Woodvale and Springfield Rd areas, particular for involvement in the children and youth programmes.
- 5) There is a need to involve more men and ethnic minorities as volunteers.
- 6) There is a need to clearly identify, explore and address the barriers to volunteering in the local community.
- 7) The programme supported participants to undertake a range of accredited and non-accredited training courses.
- 8) The programme provided structured support appropriate to the needs of individual volunteers. This allowed most volunteers to increase their employability, confidence and social skills.
- 9) There is a need to develop more systematic individual action plans for volunteers.
- 10) The volunteer programme was successful in bringing members of locally divided communities together to function on a cross community basis. It promoted social cohesion and provided opportunities for challenging prejudice.

- 11) The programme increased many participants' awareness of and access to resources within their community, particularly older people.
- 12) The Mid Springfield/Woodvale community has an ongoing need for the development of volunteering and Forthspring has an ongoing need for volunteers.
- 13) The three-year pilot has allowed the volunteer programme to develop successfully and it provides a good foundation for further development of volunteering in the local community.
- 14) Forthspring needs to secure further funding to sustain this work.

As a result of this evaluation the following recommendations are suggested:

- 1) Forthspring should build on the success and foundations of the pilot Volunteer Programme and continue to develop, support and sustain volunteering in the local community to address both social deprivation and the legacy of conflict.
- 2) Forthspring should seek further funding for a full time Volunteer Co-ordinator to sustain support for the increased number of volunteers and to further develop its volunteering programme.
- 3) Forthspring should clearly identify, explore and address the barriers to volunteering in the local community, particularly among men and young people.
- 4) Forthspring should continue to develop a range of strategies for targeting specific groups (such as over 50s, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities) for volunteer recruitment.
- 5) Forthspring should continue to develop positive working partnerships with other groups, schools and agencies involved in volunteering.
- 6) Forthspring should prioritise the recruitment of more local volunteers from the immediate Woodvale and Springfield Rd areas, particular for involvement in and greater ownership of the children and youth programmes.
- 7) Forthspring should continue to develop a Volunteering Handbook, volunteer mentoring and more systematic individual action plans for volunteers that address their specific needs and interests.
- 8) Forthspring should explore how best to assess the impact of their volunteers in the community in terms of community cohesion, personal development, increased skills and employment.

3 Background

Forthspring is a cross-community organisation, established in 1997, situated on a 'peace wall' at an interface area on the Springfield Road in West Belfast.

The vision of the organisation is of a diverse and peaceful community, where people are free to live with hope, dignity, respect and understanding.

Forthspring's mission is to work alongside people in creating an environment that builds trust and relationships within and between communities. For more than ten years the group has been working to reduce violence and sectarianism along the interface as well as increasing mutual understanding, confidence and greater cohesion between the two communities of the nationalist/republican Mid Springfield and unionist/loyalist Woodvale areas.

The group operates a range of programme based on the principles of community development and promoting good relations including:

- Carer and Toddler Group
- After Schools Provision
- Centre based Youth Programme
- Outreach and Detached Youth Programme
- Programmes for Older People
- Community Café
- Women's and Men's Groups

Volunteering by local volunteers and the contribution of international volunteers has played a central role in the development and work of Forthspring. Most of the programmes within the centre rely on local volunteers supporting paid staff in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes.

The current volunteer programme has been aimed at encouraging a diverse range of people to join together in intergenerational and fully inclusive volunteering opportunities.

The future sustainability of Forthspring is dependent on the capacity of the community to engage with and own the process of community development which Forthspring is involved in. It is therefore vital that Forthspring continues to recruit, train and support the development of volunteers to become actively involved in the various programmes and in the management of the project as a whole.

The current Volunteering Programme has been running as a pilot for the past three years and has involved over sixty volunteers.

The main aims of the programme have been as follows:

- 1) To support local community members to become active in their communities as volunteers
- 2) To support participants to undertake accredited training
- 3) To support participants to make structured, achievable, time limited action plans incorporating aspects of training and volunteering which will allow them to develop skills which will increase employability, confidence and social skills
- 4) To bring members of the local divided communities together to function as a cross community group who will develop skills and gain sufficient confidence to allow themselves to become active as citizens within their communities.
- 5) To develop a programme which will increase participants awareness of and access to resources within their community
- 6) To challenge prejudice and attempt to promote social cohesion within and between the divided communities of Mid Springfield and Woodvale

A full time Volunteer Coordinator has been employed to develop and co-ordinate the programme. This has included supporting volunteers to carry out their roles effectively as well as accessing or organising and facilitating training programmes, both in house and accredited training by external bodies.

The funding for the three-year pilot (£99,000) was secured through £30,000 from the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI) through Peace II funding (completed on 30 June 2008) and £69,000 from the Community Volunteering Scheme (DSD Funding) which completes on 31 March 2009.

As the current funding and pilot period draws to a close Forthspring has identified a need to evaluate progress against the intended aims during the past three years, to assess future needs and to plan and seek resources for the further development of volunteering in the future.

4 Evaluation Methodology

The research methodology designed to achieve the purpose of the evaluation within the resources available was as follows:

a) Internal Stakeholder Meetings

In these meetings with key personnel the consultants gained a greater understanding of the project, discussed the particular needs of the evaluation, reviewed the proposed approach, agreed the timescales and dates of meetings and gathered information and various contact details.

b) Desk Research

The desk research analysed progress against the main project aims in the funding applications and contract/letters of offer, records of participants, reports, minutes of relevant meetings etc.

c) Stakeholder Interviews

A series of semi-structured interviews was carried out with twenty-five stakeholders including staff, volunteers, programme users/participants (including young people) and external stakeholders.

The purpose of the interviews was to discuss the development of the project, progress against intended aims, future needs and ideas for the future. The interview questions are in Appendix I and a list of the interviewees is in Appendix II.

d) Surveys

Two questionnaires were designed and circulated to:

- Volunteers
- Participants/Users (one for adults and one for children/young people)

The purpose of the questionnaires was to gather the views of volunteers and participants/users on volunteering at Forthspring.

The Volunteers Questionnaire is in Appendix III. Eleven volunteers completed the questionnaire.

The Participants Questionnaire is in Appendix IV. Fourteen participants completed the adult questionnaire and eight children completed the children/young people's questionnaire.

e) Evaluation Report

A draft report with recommendations for the future was presented at the end of the process and following feedback with key internal stakeholders this final draft was completed.

5 Main Findings

This section of the report assesses progress against the main aims of the programme.

- 1) To support local community members to become active in their communities as volunteers
- 2) To support participants to undertake accredited training
- 3) To support participants to make structured, achievable, time limited action plans incorporating aspects of training and volunteering which will allow them to develop skills which will increase employability, confidence and social skills
- 4) To bring members of the local divided communities together to function as a cross community group who will develop skills and gain sufficient confidence to allow themselves to become active as citizens within their communities.
- 5) To develop a programme which will increase participants awareness of and access to resources within their community
- 6) To challenge prejudice and attempt to promote social cohesion within and between the divided communities of Mid Springfield and Woodvale

5.1 To support local community members to become active in their communities as volunteers

The programme was effective in supporting local community members to become active in their communities as volunteers.

Volunteers were supported to become active in areas such as youth work, play work, older peoples' work, community organisation governance, mentoring international volunteers, administration, working in the community café, caretaking and building maintenance.

Forthspring engaged over sixty volunteers, an average of 20-30 volunteers per quarter. This was achieved through advertising in local papers and through publicity leaflets, one to one contact and linking with other agencies and organisations (including specialist disability organisations and job centres) for referrals.

The majority of volunteers were women, not in paid employment and lived in the BT12, BT13 and BT14 areas of Belfast.

25-30% of the volunteers were men and an average of six volunteers per quarter had a disability. There were no volunteers from an ethnic minority community.

Around half of volunteers were over 50 years and the number of under 25s volunteering doubled during the three years of the programme. Age specific recruitment leaflets were designed and circulated.

All of the volunteers who completed the survey either agreed or strongly agreed that Forthspring had supported them to become active in the community as a volunteer.

The majority of participants who completed the survey either agreed or strongly agreed that Forthspring supports people in their community to become volunteers. The vast majority of respondents were also aware that volunteers run activities in Forthspring.

Local volunteers interviewed were highly complimentary about the opportunities to become active in their communities as a volunteer and highlighted the training and support that Forthspring had provided for them.

'Forthspring is a brilliant project and to be honest I get more out of it than I put in... There is great investment in volunteers and a great social network amongst the volunteers here' (Volunteer Interview)

"I am on a placement here and it is the best place I have ever worked. I love it" (Volunteer Interview)

Users of the services to pensioners commented on how they found volunteers very helpful and professional.

However, staff consistently reported the need to recruit more local volunteers from the immediate Woodvale and Springfield Rd areas, particular for involvement in the children and youth programme. There is also a need to involve more men and ethnic minorities as volunteers.

The funder consulted was very complimentary about Forthspring's volunteer programme, including recruitment, confirming that all objectives were being met and that funds had been well used for the purposes they were intended. They were confident in the skills and experience staff and volunteers had in the community relations and peace and reconciliation area, and praised the support structure and network that existed for volunteers.

'The organization has been successful in recruiting volunteers in order to meet the aims and objectives of the CVS programme so in essence their recruitment strategy has been working well for them.' (Stakeholder Interview)

5.2 To support participants to undertake accredited training

The programme supported participants to undertake a range of accredited and non-accredited training courses.

There is evidence that volunteers participated in more than 140 training opportunities during the three years of the programme. This included:

- OCN Level 2 in Youth Work
- OCR Level 2 in Community Relations
- Child Protection Training
- Diversity and Dialogue Training
- Non Violence Training
- First Aid Training
- Disability Equality Training
- Food hygiene and preparation

All of the volunteers who completed the survey either agreed or strongly agreed that Forthspring had supported them to undertake training. All of the volunteers interviewed were very happy with the training they had undertaken through Forthspring. They commented on courses ranging from short one-day courses on Child Protection, Special Needs and Food Hygiene to the accredited OCN Youth Work courses undertaken by the International Volunteers. The international volunteers were also complimentary on how staff helped them to understand the dynamics of Northern Ireland society and the conflict between the two communities.

Staff and Board members felt that Forthspring offered excellent training to enable volunteers to carry out their role. This ranged from the shorter courses on Child Protection and Disability Awareness through to the Accredited OCN Youth Work and Community Relations training.

'Training courses for volunteers are very evident at Forthspring, including residential courses, and are very well organised. People are not just thrown into the roles but get good backing and training from Maura and Helen' (Board Member)

As the programme budget did not include funding for accredited training it was usually the case that Forthspring staff would source funding from other agencies and assist the volunteer in applying. Staff would also offer mentoring to volunteers for their coursework.

5.3 To support participants to make structured, achievable, time limited action plans incorporating aspects of training and volunteering which will allow them to develop skills which will increase employability, confidence and social skills

The programme provided structured support appropriate to the needs of individual volunteers. This allowed most volunteers to increase their employability, confidence and social skills.

Respondents identified a range of skills that volunteers had developed through the programme in the different activity areas - working with young children, play skills, detached youth work skills, group work, community relations, emotional support, kitchen and catering skills.

73% of the volunteers who completed the survey either agreed or strongly agreed that volunteering at Forthspring had increased their employability.

Interviewees stated that the experience gained at Forthspring would undoubtedly enhance employment prospects and CVs for those using it for this purpose.

'Volunteering at Forthspring has been important for me to get experience...it will definitely make me more employable.' (Volunteer Interview)

64% of the volunteers who completed the survey either agreed or strongly agreed that volunteering at Forthspring had increased their confidence.

'Being a volunteer here has taken me out of my shell. I've made friendships. I enjoy coming here...I don't treat it like work, I come here more for the comradeship...you are treated like one of the staff.' (Volunteer Interview)

73% of the volunteers who completed the survey either agreed or strongly agreed that volunteering at Forthspring had increased their social skills.

'Volunteering with people from different backgrounds on the peace line increases your social skills because you are working with such a mix of people.' (Volunteer Interview)

Staff commented on how the volunteers had become more confident, disciplined and assertive in social settings and work situations.

The local volunteers consulted were satisfied with how their application to volunteer was dealt with and how they sat down with the coordinator and agreed areas of work and development.

They said they benefited greatly from the social side and the experience of volunteering, rather than simply doing it to enhance their career prospects.

'It gets you out of the house and back into a schedule and it looks good on your CV. They point you towards courses and help you anyway they can...they got me counselling when I was having problems.' (Volunteer Interview)

However they also stated that for young people, working at Forthspring would be a great first step on the ladder to employment.

'My Employment Officer placed me here and I have learned a lot. I hope I can get a job in catering after this' (Kitchen volunteer)

The International Volunteers reiterated this and agreed that the experience of youth work with Forthspring will greatly enhance their CVs and their pursuit of careers in Youth Work and Social Work.

'For the international volunteers, these placements give them a wonderful experience...learning English, practising group work and detached youth work. This such a boost to their confidence and they in turn bring something different to our young people' (Board member)

'I can't believe that I am doing group work with young people from Belfast on community relations and in my second language! I also love the detached Youth Work. I never thought I would have the confidence to approach young people like that, but now I love it'
(International Youth Volunteer)

Staff consistently stated that there was a fully supportive infrastructure for volunteers at all stages such as recruitment, induction, role planning, training, mentoring, supervision, review and exit.

'We are applying for a professional standard called Investing in Volunteers, so all the procedures and support mechanisms must be in place and we are following these criteria closely' (Volunteer Coordinator)

It was clear from the responses that the Volunteer Coordinator had developed this system and staff were complimentary on how this enabled them to manage their volunteers more effectively.

'I couldn't possibly manage the volunteers with all my other responsibilities and I have been able to leave this to Helen. This has been invaluable' (Director)

However, while staff did state there was good general support and infrastructure for volunteers, they also identified a need to develop more systematic individual action plans for volunteers. For example, having a training and development portfolio for each volunteer. This is one of the conditions of the 'Investing in Volunteers' standard and therefore there are plans to address it.

5.4 To bring members of the local divided communities together to function as a cross community group who will develop skills and gain sufficient confidence to allow themselves to become active as citizens within their communities.

The volunteer programme was successful in bringing members of locally divided communities together to function on a cross community basis.

All of the volunteers who completed the survey either agreed or strongly agreed that Forthspring brings people together on a cross community basis.

All of the users/participants (of all ages) who completed the survey either agreed or strongly agreed that Forthspring brings people together on a cross community basis.

The local volunteers asserted that Forthspring was the only option many people had to engage in cross community activities. They stated it was uniquely placed due to its position on the peaceline and the experience and commitment of its staff and volunteers.

'There is a magic to the place. My husband always says that it is the only place he knows where real cross community work takes place every day. Not just talked about or done every now and again, but real engagement every day. Without it there would be no hope at all for the communities to get together' (Volunteer in pensioner programme)

The International Volunteers spoke passionately about their work with young people both at the Clubs and in the Detached Youth Work programme. They spoke of their excitement in setting up a joint community volleyball team using sport to break down sectarian barriers. They were committed to promoting good relations between young people and were not daunted by the challenge, despite hearing of previous setbacks.

'Other international volunteers living in Belfast don't have the same knowledge about the community in the way that we do here. We have been exposed to cross community issues and training.'
(Volunteer Interview)

An external stakeholder interviewee valued Forthspring's cross community work and had particular praise for the older peoples' programme. He hoped to see development of more exchange events and residentials with groups from other parts of Ireland, North and South.

5.5 To develop a programme which will increase participants awareness of and access to resources within their community

There is evidence that the programme increased many participants' awareness of and access to resources within their community, particularly older people.

Staff highlighted that Forthspring itself offered a very good range of activities and social outlets to the local community and staff and volunteers were qualified and skilled in a range of areas.

Volunteers from the pensioners' service felt that Forthspring was outstanding in this with regard to older people from the area, who had a range of social and leisure opportunities on their doorstep.

Older people stated that the clubs and activities were vital to them and their peers in the area and highlighted the range of interesting things they had become involved in through the project including politics and history projects as well as social and leisure outings.

'I can't believe some of the things I have been doing at my age. I mean how would I have got involved in researching history if it wasn't for Forthspring' (Pensioner)

5.6 To challenge prejudice and attempt to promote social cohesion within and between the divided communities of Mid Springfield and Woodvale

The programme promoted social cohesion between the divided communities of Mid Springfield and Woodvale. It also provided opportunities for challenging prejudice.

Both the older people and young people consulted praised Forthspring and the work of the volunteers in relation to its promotion of cross community cohesion.

'The volunteering programme exposes you to people from both sides of the wall and you get to learn what the commonalities and differences as we develop a common goal' (Volunteer Interview)

Older people consulted highlighted the groups and projects that brought older people from both communities together on a regular basis. This included mixed clubs and activities, cross border projects with a group from Dublin and a range of opportunities to discuss the past and the Troubles with people from the 'other' community.

They also commented on the fact that staff and volunteers were an integrated team and the events were held in a 'relaxed' atmosphere.

'These Clubs would not have happened ten years ago. They are the only opportunities for the two sides to get together and it is wonderful. I have made great Catholic friends and still keep in touch with women from the Dublin' (Pensioner)

'Through Forthspring I have been involved in history and politics projects and even met with paramilitaries to try and understand their views and experiences. The social side is a real lifeline for me' (Pensioner)

The broader perspectives brought by the international volunteers were also highlighted as a strength of the programme.

'The international volunteers can bring an outside perspective to challenge prejudice.' (Volunteer Interview)

'The international involvement brings in learning from different countries.' (Volunteer Interview)

However, while volunteers and staff promote good relations and challenge prejudice the youth activities remain largely segregated due to the challenges of bringing groups of young people together across the divide. For example if a sectarian incident happens in the community the young people can be put under pressure to withdraw from the planned integration activities. The youth programme at present remains separate, but the young people interviewed said they would be happy to engage in cross community activity that was planned. One of the young people had been involved in mixed activities in the past while the other three had not. Plans were at an advanced stage for a volleyball team with players from both sides of the community to represent Forthspring and all planned to attend. They all felt that mixed residential would be a good way to start contact.

'I have no problem meeting them (Catholic young people). We met them at a residential last year and they were dead on, but then we came back they started all the hassle again. But if they are dead on I am happy to meet them again' (Young person)

A related challenge is the over reliance on International Volunteers in the Youth programme due to difficulties in recruiting local

volunteers as youth leaders. There is a need for more local volunteers from the immediate vicinity of Forthspring.

'It would be great to have young people in their 20's from both sides of the community to help out at our events and mentor and act as role models for the kids. But it is very hard to recruit' (Staff member)

While half of the children/young people who completed the participants survey indicated that they would be interested in becoming a volunteer at Forthspring, half indicated that they would not be interested in volunteering.

5.7 Future Needs

From the sample of stakeholders consulted it is clear that the Mid Springfield/Woodvale community has an ongoing need for the development of volunteering and Forthspring has an ongoing need for volunteers.

All of the volunteers who completed the survey strongly agreed that there is a need for a volunteering programme in the community over the next three years.

91% of the volunteers who completed the volunteer survey either agreed or strongly agreed that volunteering at Forthspring needs to develop in the future.

The local volunteers interviewed asserted that the local community relied heavily on Forthspring's programme of activities and without volunteers these would cease.

'Our community would be lost without Forthspring. Older people would have nowhere to go and who knows what our young ones would get up to if they didn't have the youth clubs' (Local Volunteer)

Staff agreed that volunteers were central to Forthspring and without the Volunteer Programme the activities would cease, leaving a void in many of the older people's lives, and resulting in no hope for future youth reconciliation in the area.

Of the participants who answered the question in the participant survey, six strongly agreed and seven agreed that Forthspring needs more volunteers for the future. Six participants indicated that they did not know and one disagreed.

However, in the participants survey only four adult participants expressed an interest in becoming a volunteer. Five respondents said 'don't know'.

This would suggest barriers to participating as a volunteer in spite of identifying a need for volunteering in the local community. There is a need to clearly identify, explore and address the barriers to volunteering in the local community.

'Volunteering is going to become more and more key. In the past it was seen as somebody who does good, but it needs to be sold to local people as a means of getting experience.' (Volunteer Interview)

'With a decrease in funding Forthspring will become more reliant on volunteers...we need more local volunteers with more of a connection and ownership of Forthspring.' (Volunteer Interview)

There is a particular need to address barriers to volunteering among young people and men. Suggestions included supporting more men to get involved in community development and the formation of men's groups similar to the successful women's groups.

Staff consistently reported the need to recruit more local volunteers from the Woodvale and Springfield areas, particular in the children and youth programme. This would not only give the volunteers the benefits of enhanced skills and employability, but their involvement particularly in youth programmes would greatly assist Forthspring in achieving its reconciliation objectives. Direct consultation with members of the community followed by a well planned, resourced and direct pro active recruitment drive in the local area would appear to be a priority.

Suggestions included a proactive recruitment drive in the local area with face-to-face engagement and encouragement.

"I would like to see more men getting involved. Maybe they should target young men looking to get into the food industry to get some experience in the café.' (Volunteer Interview)

Older participants interviewed stressed the need for the Forthspring volunteer programme to continue. They praised staff and volunteers very highly and stated there would be no cross community contact at all in the area without the input of Forthspring and its volunteers.

'I would be lost without Forthspring. I really don't know what I would do with myself. Stay in the house I suppose' (Pensioner)

The young people consulted also said they would have nowhere to go without the Youth Club and would end up hanging around the streets. They were positive about the staff and particularly the international volunteers, expressing great respect for them. There is a clear need to build on these foundations in the future.

'This three year project has laid the foundations but there is much more cross community work to be done especially in the youth area which is extremely sensitive and challenging. If we don't do it here, then who will?' (Staff member)

It is clear from the positive feedback from all categories of respondent that the Volunteer programme is vital for Forthspring and provides a valuable resource to communities in need. The unique environment in which Forthspring operates and the complexities and sensitivities of the divided communities make this area of work extremely challenging, and there is always more that can be done. This period of funding has allowed the programme to develop but it is still very much at the foundation stage with much more to be achieved, particularly in the area of youth reconciliation. This is an area of work that can be painstakingly slow and needs a lot of time, commitment and resource allocated to it. If Forthspring did not undertake this work with young people in the area, there would be little hope for reconciliation and surely such a situation cannot be allowed to persist.

The main conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation, based on these findings are presented below.

6 Conclusions

- 1) The Volunteer Programme was effective in supporting local community members to become active in their communities as volunteers. Forthspring supported 20-30 volunteers per quarter to become active in areas such as youth work, play work, older peoples' work, community organisation governance, mentoring international volunteers, administration, working in the community café, caretaking and building maintenance.
- 2) The majority of volunteers were women, not in paid employment and living in North/West Belfast.
- 3) The Volunteer Programme is vital for Forthspring and provides a valuable resource in an area of high social deprivation with a legacy of conflict. The unique environment in which Forthspring operates and the complexities and sensitivities of the divided communities make this area of work extremely challenging, and there is a need for sustained community interventions of this kind.
- 4) There is a need to recruit more local volunteers from the immediate Woodvale and Springfield Rd areas, particular for involvement in the children and youth programmes.
- 5) There is a need to involve more men and ethnic minorities as volunteers.
- 6) There is a need to clearly identify, explore and address the barriers to volunteering in the local community.
- 7) The programme supported participants to undertake a range of accredited and non-accredited training courses.
- 8) The programme provided structured support appropriate to the needs of individual volunteers. This allowed most volunteers to increase their employability, confidence and social skills.
- 9) There is a need to develop more systematic individual action plans for volunteers.
- 10) The volunteer programme was successful in bringing members of locally divided communities together to function on a cross community basis. It promoted social cohesion and provided opportunities for challenging prejudice.
- 11) The programme increased many participants' awareness of and access to resources within their community, particularly older people.
- 12) The Mid Springfield/Woodvale community has an ongoing need for the development of volunteering and Forthspring has an ongoing need for volunteers.
- 13) The three-year pilot has allowed the volunteer programme to develop successfully and it provides a good foundation for further development of volunteering in the local community.
- 14) Forthspring needs to secure further funding to sustain this work.

7 Recommendations

As a result of this evaluation of the three-year pilot Volunteer Programme, the following recommendations are suggested:

- 1) Forthspring should build on the success and foundations of the pilot Volunteer Programme and continue to develop, support and sustain volunteering in the local community to address both social deprivation and the legacy of conflict.
- 2) Forthspring should seek further funding for a full time Volunteer Co-ordinator to sustain support for the increased number of volunteers and to further develop its volunteering programme.
- 3) Forthspring should clearly identify, explore and address the barriers to volunteering in the local community, particularly among men and young people.
- 4) Forthspring should continue to develop a range of strategies for targeting specific groups (such as over 50s, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities) for volunteer recruitment.
- 5) Forthspring should continue to develop positive working partnerships with other groups, schools and agencies involved in volunteering.
- 6) Forthspring should prioritise the recruitment of more local volunteers from the immediate Woodvale and Springfield Rd areas, particular for involvement in and greater ownership of the children and youth programmes.
- 7) Forthspring should continue to develop a Volunteering Handbook, volunteer mentoring and more systematic individual action plans for volunteers that address their specific needs and interests.
- 8) Forthspring should explore how best to assess the impact of their volunteers in the community in terms of community cohesion, personal development, increased skills and employment.

Appendix I: Semi Structured Interview Questions

VOLUNTEERS AND INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

1. How has Forthspring supported you/people to become active in the community as volunteer?
2. How has Forthspring supported you/people to undertake accredited training in volunteering?
3. How has Forthspring supported you/people to make an action plan for volunteering?
4. What sort of skills have you/volunteers developed in your/their volunteering?
5. To what extent has volunteering increased your/their:
 - (a) employability
 - (b) confidence
 - (c) social skills

VOLUNTEERS, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

6. To what extent do you think Forthspring has developed skills and confidence to support local volunteers to become active as citizens within their community?
7. To what extent has the volunteer programme brought members of divided communities together to function as a cross community group?
8. To what extent has the volunteer programme challenged prejudice and promoted cohesion within and between Mid Springfield and Woodvale?
9. What do you see as the needs of the local community in relation to volunteering over the next three years?
10. How do you think volunteering at Forthspring needs to develop in the future?
11. Have you any other comments you would like to feed into this evaluation?

Appendix II: Interviewees

- 1) Trudy Bailie (Centre User/Local Volunteer)
- 2) Allison Bouley, (International Volunteer)
- 3) Veronica Boyle (After Schools Co-ordinator)
- 4) Sinead Cashman (Café Co-ordinator)
- 5) Michael Duffy (Local Volunteer)
- 6) Jane Gribben (Volunteer Development Agency)
- 7) Tom Hannon (Cornerstone Community and Board Member)
- 8) Heiner Heizmann (International Volunteer)
- 9) Pam Kane (Board Member/Local Volunteer)
- 10) Pat Kempton (Local Volunteer)
- 11) Stuart Mc McCullough (Youth Club Member)
- 12) Jordan Pollock (Youth Club Member)
- 13) Kyle Millar (Youth Club Member)
- 14) Nicholas Wilson (Youth Club Member)
- 15) Adam Andrews (Youth Club Member)
- 16) Douglas Brown (Youth Club Member)
- 17) Jamie (Youth Club Member)
- 18) Jamie-Lee (Youth Club Member)
- 19) Deirdre McMahon (Youth Worker)
- 20) Helen McVitty (Volunteer Co-ordinator)
- 21) Maura Moore (Director)
- 22) Robin Mydlak (International Volunteer)
- 23) Helen Smith (Board Member)
- 24) Violet Walker (Centre User/Local Volunteer)
- 25) Barbara Watson (Board Member)

Appendix III: Volunteers Questionnaire

- 1 **Forthspring has supported me to become active in the community as volunteer (please circle)**
- Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree
- 2 **Forthspring has supported me to undertake training**
- Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree
- 3 **Volunteering at Forthspring has increased my employability**
- Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree
- 4 **Volunteering at Forthspring has increased my confidence**
- Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree
- 5 **Volunteering at Forthspring has increased my social skills**
- Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree
- 6 **Forthspring brings people together on a cross community basis**
- Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree
- 7 **There is a need for a volunteering programme in this community over the next three years**
- Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree
- 8 **Volunteering at Forthspring needs to develop in the future**
- Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree

Appendix IV: Participants Questionnaire

1 Fortspring supports people in my community to become volunteers (please circle)

Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree

2 Volunteers run activities I am involved in at Fortspring

Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree

3 This community needs more people to volunteer

Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree

4 I am interested in becoming a volunteer

Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree

5 Fortspring brings people together on a cross community basis

Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree

6 Fortspring needs more volunteers for the future

Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree