



Interaction Institute  
*for Social Change*

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## **Forthspring Inter Community Group**

### **Strategy 2016 – 2021 (with indicative actions)**

(14.02.17)

*This strategy was developed over a three month visioning and planning process in early 2016 which involved board members, staff and users working together to create a clear and sustainable 5-year map for the organisation. With external support from the Interaction Institute for Social Change (IISC), we consulted with individuals, groups and other organisations about the potential future direction and work of Forthspring. We spent time thinking and working together to imagine what the future we want looks like and charting ways to get there. The results of this work are presented here.*

# Our Context

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Forthspring Inter Community Group is based within the old Springfield Methodist Church building at 373 Springfield Road, beside the Springfield/Woodvale 'peaceline' in West Belfast.

Forthspring is possibly the oldest of a handful of shared spaces situated at an interface in Belfast and dedicated to providing much-needed local services, building cross-community relationships and supporting local empowerment through a community development approach.

Established as an inter-community group in 1997, Fortspring has delivered services over this period to the broader neighbourhood on both sides of the interface and beyond, sometimes against a backdrop of violent civil and political conflict. This broader area has also been characterised for many years by significant levels of disadvantage, particularly relating to education, health and employment, and regularly features within the top three percent of the most deprived wards within Northern Ireland. We seek to address these deprivation inequalities through our strategic aims and objectives.

# Our Vision

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Our vision is of a diverse, vibrant and flourishing neighbourhood where people feel secure, confident and positive about their future.

# Our Mission

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Forthspring is an inclusive and innovative organisation based in a shared space at the Springfield/Woodvale interface. We seek to enhance life opportunities for local people and to enable sustained relationships through a varied range of development programmes and activities.

# Our Core Values

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*The following values underpin our work:*

## **Proactivity**

We actively seek out opportunities to make a positive impact in our work and on the lives of those we work with.

## **Honesty**

We maintain the highest integrity in all our dealings with individuals, groups and organisations.

**Creativity**

We strive to inspire through innovation and creativity, together with excellence and quality in our practice.

**Equality and diversity**

We welcome all those who use our centre and support them to feel secure, respected, heard and valued.

**Partnership**

We promote partnership, team working and community engagement to advance the wellbeing of the people we serve.

**Peace-building**

We work with others to foster a durable peace, to prevent the recurrence of violence by supporting local people in addressing the root causes and effects of conflict, and to promote good relations.

**Environmental responsibility**

We acknowledge our interdependence with the natural world and our roles and responsibilities as stewards of the environment.

**Social justice**

We actively promote a community development approach that supports the empowerment of people to make change happen.

# Our Strategic Aims, and Objectives

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**Strategic Aim (1) – To support individuals, families and groups to improve their social, economic, emotional and physical well-being.**

**Objectives:**

- a) **Provide opportunities for adults, families and groups to increase knowledge, awareness and aspirations.**

To do this we will:

*Run accredited and non-accredited training on a wide range of topics; provide opportunities for creativity, self-expression and peer support; promote positive role models for young people, and run intergenerational events focusing on the future.*

- b) **Facilitate relationship building and improve connections between Forthspring, local residents and service providers in order to improve life opportunities.**

To do this we will:

*Run community events and festivals; act as a referral point to other services, and build and maintain relationships with statutory and voluntary service providers.*

- c) **Strengthen families through programmes that support them to improve their life opportunities.**

To do this we will:

*Provide peer and parenting support for families; deliver skills-based training; offer access to counselling, mentoring and specialist services, and build relationships between schools, families and Forthspring.*

- d) **Challenge division and build connections that promote mutual understanding.**

To do this we will:

*Organise anti-sectarian initiatives and events and deliver programmes exploring the NI conflict and its legacy.*

**Strategic Aim (2) – To support Children and Young People to achieve their aspirations.**

**Objectives:**

- a) **Provide life long learning opportunities for Children and Young People (CYP) to improve social and civic connections.**

To do this we will:

*Provide training, education and development opportunities; link CYP with appropriate supports, and create opportunities for CYP to engage with statutory and voluntary services.*

- b) **Provide a holistic approach to improving Children and Young People’s aspirational development and well-being (social, emotional and physical).**

To do this we will:

*Offer in-school support and after-schools programmes to CYP; run group activities and one-to-one sessions with CYP, and provide links for CYP to services such as counselling, mentoring and training.*

- c) **Support children and young people’s empowerment in the community to become champions for change.**

To do this we will:

*Offer a detached youth work service; run training courses and promote leadership development and volunteering opportunities, and support CYP to develop and organise community events.*

### **Strategic Aim (3) – To operate our centre as a welcoming and accessible shared space**

#### **Objectives:**

- a) **Raise awareness of, and connection with, Forthspring as an organisation within the local community and further afield.**

To do this we will:

*Develop and implement an on-going marketing strategy that clearly describes what Forthspring does and the benefits of becoming involved in its activities, and connect and consult with local people in the design and development of provision.*

- b) **Maximise the effective use of the centre.**

To do this we will:

*Develop and implement a building usage plan to make the best possible use of the Centre, and offer a variety of programmes that attract people into the building.*

- c) **Create a more welcoming, accessible, safe and quality centre.**

To do this we will:

*Improve the appearance and visible identity of the building and its grounds, to maximise accessibility of the building.*

- d) **More accurately reflect the faith based origins of Forthspring and build on the opportunities these provide.**

To do this we will:

*Publicly acknowledge the faith-based history within the building and provide opportunities to explore the relevance of this today.*

**Strategic Aim (4) Develop Forthspring as an organisation with the necessary strengths, skills and resources to achieve its mission.**

**Objectives:**

- a) **Increase the effectiveness of Forthspring's organisational structures, including staffing.**

To do this we will:

*Undertake a review of the management, staff and pay structure; provide staff support and development opportunities; maintain levels of morale within the organisation, and further develop relationships and communication between Board and staff.*

- b) **Ensure a sustainable financial future for the organisation.**

To do this we will:

*Develop and implement a fundraising strategy and business plan, linked to the development needs of the organisation.*

- c) **Increase the capacity and effectiveness of the Board, and make it more reflective of the local community.**

To do this we will:

*Undertake a review of current governance structures and develop a strategy to meet the governance needs of the organisation.*