Strategic Plan
2017-2020

A Quaker charity serving individuals, families and communities in Northern Ireland
Introduction

Quaker Service is a Quaker charity providing support for people in Northern Ireland going through difficult times. By delivering practical, social and emotional support services that value and empower people just where they are, we play our part in reducing violence, suffering and disadvantage. Our work is often with those in our society who are the most forgotten, unpopular or sometimes viewed as “undeserving”. Simply put, we endeavour to make love visible.
We do this through:

**Quaker Cottage**: a whole-community family day care centre delivering a range of therapeutic services for mothers, children and teenagers in some of the most disadvantaged areas in Belfast.

**Quaker Connections**: a volunteer programme based at Maghaberry Prison, where people in prison establishments in Northern Ireland are supported by a range of befriending services.

**Quaker Care**: a charity retail outlet raising unrestricted funds for our work and providing work experience for people in prison and those on community service.

Throughout the organisation, we evidence increased self-worth and confidence, improved social and life skills and enhanced mutual understanding and respect in those with whom we work. And we are involved in a range of partnerships speaking on behalf of the most vulnerable in our communities as well as in the promotion of restorative philosophy and practices in all aspects of life and society across the island of Ireland.

**Our people**

**Management Board**: a group of 10-12 relevantly qualified and experienced people, drawn from the charity’s membership. They work together with the Finance & Personnel Committee and sub-groups to provide governance and strategic direction for the charity.

**Membership**: our 100+ members are comprised of Friends and Attenders from Ulster Quarterly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland.

**Staff community**: 16 paid staff members and over 60 volunteers.

**Quaker Care**: our sister company managed by a Board of 7-10 people drawn from the membership of Quaker Care to provide governance and set the strategic direction for our social economy activities.

**Our legal status**: We are a charity registered by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland: NIC 102457 and a company limited by guarantee registered in Northern Ireland: NI0 63929.

**Why we do what we do**

Quaker Service is a faith based charity which was pioneered and developed by The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) since 1969. Our ethos is guided by Quaker beliefs and values. Quakers believe that there is a divine spark in everyone and this fundamental belief leads us to value the equal worth and unique nature of each person.

The Quaker values which underpin our policies and practices are:

**Truth and integrity**
- Integrity is our guiding principle and we aim to always be honest and fair in all our dealings and to speak the truth to all people at all times, including people in positions of power.

**Equality, Justice and Human Rights**
- We aim to treat all people fairly, equally and without judgement respecting and accepting all, regardless of individual circumstances. We will support the promotion and protection of human rights.
- We will support a fair and restorative justice system.

**Non-violence**
- We aim to find creative ways of dealing with conflict by appealing to the capacity for love and goodness in ourselves and in others.
**Simplicity and Sustainability**
- We aim to focus on what is most important and will deliberately use our resources in ways that are most needed.
- We aim to ensure that our services are delivered and our resources are managed in a sustainable manner.

**Our Vision**
- To live in a society where people are valued and fulfil their potential.

**Our Mission**
- To play a practical role in reducing violence, suffering and disadvantage by providing services which support, value and empower people.

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**A history of service**

Quaker Service has been translating Quaker values of peace, equality, truth and simplicity into action since the early 1970s. We emerged when Friends started providing practical support to families visiting internees at the Maze. That grew into the first family prison visitors’ centre in the UK and a series of other projects have emerged over the years responding to needs in various forms. Our work since has always been underpinned by the belief in the worth of each individual and by the desire to meet need, particularly where it might otherwise be unmet. We have a reputation for placing quality over quantity and for accepting people where they are, without judgement.

In recent years, we have introduced self-evaluation processes for our work with children and young people at Quaker Cottage. The annual evaluation reports contain many stories of lives changed for the better. In addition, we commissioned an external evaluation of our Quaker Connections befriending project with Ulster University and Nottingham Trent University. In the published report, the researchers stated “The voices of the participants clearly demonstrate the vital role the Project plays in the lives of those held at HMP Maghaberry in reducing social isolation, providing opportunities for befrienees to experience some relief from the monotony of the prison environment and creating a space for those most isolated to be listed to without prejudice and affording them respect and dignity”.

We plan to improve our evaluation processes to ensure that positive outcomes for individuals and families is centre to all that we do whilst continuing to provide high quality services co-designed and co-produced with those with whom we work.

During the strategic planning process, we considered the question “What makes us distinctive?” and some of our reflections are set out below:
- There is a belief and reality to our values – equality, truth, integrity, justice, respect and acceptance of who people are – ‘seeing the person not the problem’.
- We identify ways of empowerment and giving voice to those people/issues without a voice using “asset-based” approaches.
• Our decisions to provide services are based on identifying and meeting need rather than making use of available funding.
• We want to do something well; the work does not necessarily need to be large-scale but should be sustainable.
• We expect our staff to epitomise Quaker values.
• We are concerned to do the ‘right’ thing.
• We try to take holistic approaches with individuals and families.
• We work on a whole community basis — there is a neutrality to Quaker work that is widely recognised.
• We can work quietly - ‘below the radar’ and respect the confidentiality of work where necessary. We recognise that working quietly has positives and negatives.
• We are trusted and accepted by a wide range of people/organisations and this gives us access to the most vulnerable people at times.
• Our values are widely recognised and our reputation, historically and currently, is strong. We are willing to try new ideas and projects.
• We balance the risks and work with reflection.

We also considered our weaknesses and hope that our priorities for change will address these:
• We have had an over reliance on statutory funding
• We have trusted our past reputation and good will to continue opening doors for us
• We have not fully considered appropriate succession planning
• Our communication across the charity needs improvement

Report on key actions over this past 3 years:

a. Providing support and responding to need:
We evidenced increased self-worth and confidence, improved social and life skills and enhanced mutual understanding and respect in those who were supported:

At Quaker Cottage:
• On average, 50 mothers, 139 primary school aged children and 99 young people were recipients of intensive individual and family support packages each year at Quaker Cottage with attendances exceeding 85%.
• Three family residential were provided each year at the Corrymeela Centre at Ballycastle, each of 4 days’ duration. Additional focussed residential were organised for the teenage project.
• A full summer programme of activities for each person attending the Cottage was provided each year.
• Detailed self-evaluation reports were published each year for (1) after schools’ projects and (2) work with young people.
• A new year-long modular programme was developed and implemented for young people based on their own feedback.

At the Monica Barritt Visitors’ Centre, Maghaberry Prison:
• Practical and emotional support was provided for over 6,000 people visiting Maghaberry Prison each month during the period.
• A celebration of 25 years of providing services at Maghaberry Prison was held at the Visitors’ Centre opened by the Minister of Justice.
• A tender for provision of services was submitted in partnership with Niacro for visitors’ centre services
Through Quaker Connections volunteer befriending:

- An average of 217 visits by befrienders to people isolated at Maghaberry Prison each year. In addition to visits in the main visiting hall, befrienders now visit at the Donard Centre within the prison and on prison wings where appropriate.
- 37 visitor support sessions held for new families visiting Maghaberry Prison in 2014/15. This service was terminated in early 2016 at the request of the NI Prison Service.
- Volunteer befriender services commenced at Magilligan Prison (with an average of 50 visits per annum) and at the Shannon Clinic in East Belfast, both from 2014/15.
- Quaker Connections recipient of two awards.

Through the Restorative Justice Forum (NI):

- Supported a high profile all-Ireland conference in Dundalk in 2014 attended by over 150 restorative practitioners from all over the island and opened by the Justice Ministers from both jurisdictions.
- Commenced a partnership between Restorative Justice Forum (NI) and Restorative Practices Ireland.
- Supported the development of three all-island planning sub-groups
- Supported the delivery of two all-Ireland themed workshops on victims and young people.
- Supported the 2nd all-Ireland conference in Dundalk in 2016 attended by over 100 delegates from across the island.
- And at Quaker Service, piloted a new “restorative conversations” project for people on community service placements at Quaker Care.

b) Giving voice:

- Continued remaining actively involved in several inter-agency groups tasked with improving services for people in prison.
- Involved in a partnership with other agencies providing family awareness training with all newly recruited prison custody officers. This was extended to current prison staff.
- Involved in a “Prison Reform Events” partnership with other agencies in hosting delivering a series of three breakfast meetings on Prison Reform topics ending with a seminar hosted with the Justice Minister.
- Continued involvement at strategic and operational level in prison reform actions leading from the Prison Review Team Report 2014.
- Established a new Communications sub-group of the Board
- Designed and launched new websites for Quaker Service and Quaker Care.

c) Resourcing our staff:

- Rolled out a Living Wage policy.
- Implemented Dignity at Work policy.
- Implemented a volunteer policy for Quaker Care volunteers.
- Implemented an Occupational Health Policy and appointed an Occupational Health advisory service.
- Implemented an updated Redundancy Policy.
- Staff member nominated for and awarded Justice Champion commendation by the Minister of Justice for storytelling work within the criminal justice sector.

d) Governance:

- Completed a high-level review of Core Services resulting in a new organisational structure. This resulted in recruiting a new Operations Manager post and increasing capacity within Quaker Care childcare services and Quaker Connections.
- Provided Quaker ethos awareness training for board, staff and volunteers.
- Established a Quaker Care change management sub group and completed a 2-year review of the future of Quaker Care retail outlets.
• Reviewed audit and accountancy requirements and appointed new Auditors.
• Successfully registered as a charity by the Charity Commission for NI
• Commenced a new strategic planning cycle.
• Commenced working through the Code of Good Governance health check.
• Implemented a Statement of Purpose for Quaker Cottage.
• Prepared a 3-year fundraising plan.

A future of opportunity

“What are the roots of injustice that we need to address? What are the seeds of change that we should plant?” (Quakers in Criminal Justice Newsletter, 2014)

Over the next 4 years we plan to consolidate and develop our current activities to ensure that the support we provide for people in difficult times is the best we can offer. We recognise that we need to respond to growing challenges both locally and globally.

Northern Ireland has suffered more deeply from recession and austerity that the rest of the UK. More children live in poverty here, youth unemployment is much higher than the UK average, we have a higher percentage of people on long-term sick or looking after family members and our wages are lower. Thus, more are reliant on benefits, partly as a legacy of our past, and those benefits are being scaled back. There is growing concern about the impact of the UK referendum vote to leave the European Union and the fear, grounded in much reality, that Northern Ireland may suffer increased hardship. Global politics appear to point towards a more insular and protectionist society rather than a diverse, outward looking society. And a particular risk for Quaker Service is the move towards procurement and privatisation by government departments, threatening our traditional key sources of funding. For Quaker Service, the knock-on effect of these external pressures is an increasing need for value based support for the most vulnerable families and children in our local communities. We have had to spend much time planning to strengthen our core and volunteer management support systems to increase our capacity to deliver high quality services to meet that need. Expansion to service delivery will require more resourcing at a time when our statutory funding sources have depleted.

With this backdrop, influencing the movers and shakers in society becomes more challenging. However, throughout the past 3½ centuries, Friends have remained steadfast in the way they respond to human suffering and issues, despite opposition or uncertain future. Likewise, Quaker Service intends to continue to respond by always endeavouring to do “the right thing” and provide high quality services where they are most needed despite these difficulties. We need to continue to take stock, innovate and make sure we are still having impact. The time to exit our work is when (1) there is no longer a genuine need; (2) the need is met appropriately by someone else or (3) when we can no longer resource it.

We welcome the opportunities being brought by the new Programme for Government and we plan to embrace and be part of a future underpinned by an ‘outcomes based accountability’ strategy. We wish to position ourselves as an organisation willing to work collaboratively in speaking to policy makers on behalf of those who have no voice; to empower those with whom we work
this are secured by considering innovative ways to sustain the organisation into the future. Our loving holistic approach to deep rooted family challenges and difficulties has served us well in the past and we intend to build upon these strengths to reach as many of those most undervalued in society as we can.

We feel confident that we are currently in a strong place to achieve these goals. We scored highly the Core Capacity Assessment Tool (CCAT) recently completed by our board and senior staff members. This CCAT governance exercise measured our effectiveness in relation to four core capacities—leadership, adaptability, management, and technical capacities—as well as organisational culture. Our Management Board is currently working through some areas of improvement so that when we repeat the exercise in a year’s time, it is hoped that a further move towards excellence in governance and service delivery will have been achieved.

Summary challenges and opportunities

The key challenges for Quaker Service as we operate in this deeply uncertain climate are:

1. The impact of Brexit with the possible erosion of human and children’s rights and the economic and legislative changes that have potential to cause fear and political instability.
2. The impact of wider global policies which may challenge and undermine achieving a peaceful and caring society, for example, the increasing numbers of refugees and the growing gap between rich and poor.
3. The impact of local politics, specifically:
   - Continuing budgetary cuts;
   - Policy changes in how government works with the voluntary sector, for example, the move to procurement and privatisation over grant funding;
4. Changes and rationalisation in government departments, particularly in justice, education and health;
5. The impact of Welfare Reform and its effect on those most in need. Facts such as 23% of children living in poverty; the high levels of those with disabilities; and unemployment well above the UK average will cause pressure on the most vulnerable and increase the call on our services.

The key opportunities for the future which we need to grasp and develop are:

1. Building strategic partnerships and effectively speaking “truth to power”.
2. Engaging with the new Programme for Government.
3. Co-designing and co-producing services with those who use them directly or indirectly.
4. Working in the criminal justice sector to devise initiatives and services which support rehabilitation and desistance and provide practical programmes that influence the criminal justice system and broader society to achieve a more humane and enlightened approach to those in prison and their families.
5. Devising ways to influence government to tackle poverty and inequality as a priority as it forms strategies and legislation to ensure that Northern Ireland is a better place to live in.
Strategic aims, priorities and outcomes

The process:
- The Management Board established a Strategic Planning sub-group comprised of a small group of board and senior staff members to take forward its 4th strategic planning process. The group met 6 times from February to August 2016.
- The Management Board discussed the strategic planning process at each of their monthly meetings from February 2016 to January 2017 when the plan was finalised.
- A Board/senior management team Away Day was held in February 2016 and a further Board Away Day was held in November 2016.
- A series of discussions with key stakeholders centred upon (1) external factors they may be aware of that might affect our current/future work; and (2) opportunities for development.
- The Communications sub-group was tasked with getting feedback from the organisations members and (1) wrote to all Clerks of Preparatory Meetings in Ulster Quarterly Meeting; (2) gathered feedback from Meetings; and (3) organised consultation during the organisation's AGM in September 2016.

Key information factored into our strategic planning process:
- Our key priorities for the next three years are to consolidate and develop our current activities and to generate adequate income to secure these.
- It's a changing world with poverty and inequality needs validating our work. Change is inevitable, even consolidation requires change.
- The future has a lot of unknowns and uncertainties. We should prepare for this, taking time out for information gathering, reflection and need to get ‘fit’ as a Board.
- We need to identify opportunities to educate/inform our membership by giving them a greater voice and ensuring Friends have an important role, though bearing in mind that the Quaker community is small.
- In terms of strategic reach, it is important to bear in mind the Programme for Government.
- We should identify the causes in society (poverty, cuts, inequality etc) that might prevent the success of our programme outcomes — exposing these gaps will become our campaigning issues.
- Co-designing and co-production will be a challenge for our client groups — we need to identify models of practice on how we involve our ‘experts by experience’.
- We should continue developing suitable partnerships with others doing similar work, whether this is in service delivery or in jointly ‘speaking to power’.
- We need to consider which elements of our current service delivery are fundamental to our existence, and which are optional depending upon funding.
- There is a need to carefully consider our response to a changing funding environment and to increase unrestricted funding sources.
- In raising optimum unrestricted income, we need to ensure the success of our social economy project, Quaker Care.

The people we serve

People in most need in North and West Belfast

People in prison establishments in Northern Ireland
Our outcomes are underpinned by our vision, mission, ethos and values.

Outcomes for those we serve:

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<th>Outcomes for those we serve</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
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| Greater appreciation of self and others | • Increased social and life skills  
  • Improved level of respect for self and others  
  • Embraced and celebrated equality and diversity  
  • Improved caring for others and helping those in need |
| Increased confidence and self-worth | • Fulfilled potential  
  • Longer, happier and more active lives |
| Improved life skills | • Safer families and communities  
  • Children and young people have the best start in life |

Outcomes for our organisation:

- We are environmentally friendly
- We are a financially healthy and sustainable organisation
- We have the ability to explore, contribute to or meet new and emerging needs

How we will achieve our outcomes:

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<th>What will we do to achieve these outcomes?</th>
<th>Priorities for change and development</th>
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| 1. Provide support in difficult times     | • Protect, sustain and develop Quaker Cottage family support services in North and West Belfast  
  • Protect, sustain and develop Quaker Cottage “Mount Teens” for young people at risk/in need in North and West Belfast  
  • Protect, sustain and develop Quaker Connections at all prison establishments in NI.  
  • Further develop story telling approaches with those individuals/groups most in need/at risk  
  • Develop Restorative Practices within existing work. |
| 2. Listen and give voice                  | • Build a sphere of influence (form strategic alliances) with people in power  
  • Extend and develop partnership and collaboration with other relevant groups  
  • Connect with and learn from other Quaker groups in the Republic of Ireland, UK and potentially Europe.  
  • Develop a youth panel to represent the voice of young people in our decisions and services |
• Increase the frequency with which we ask those we serve for their feedback on how we provide programmes and services.
• Consider initiating research at Quaker Cottage to provide evidence about longer-term impact on families and their communities to inform policy and practice.

3. Respond to new needs
• Design and implement a project management framework including assessment criteria for accepting/rejecting proposed new projects.
• Work in partnership with relevant organisations with expertise to consider gaps in support for refused/destitute asylum seekers

4. Strengthen governance and resourcing
• Work through and implement a Code of Good Governance including training for Management Board in roles and responsibilities; reviewing sub-Committee structure.
• Complete the “Path to Impact” Core Capacity Assessment Tool
• Explore how to underpin all our service delivery on an outcome based accountability model which will be appropriate to our needs.
• Develop a cohesive staff community (paid and volunteer staff) with Quaker ethos at its heart.
• Improve financial stability and develop more diversified funding sources to ensure we are not reliant on government income
• Optimise unrestricted funding potential from our social economy project, Quaker Care.
• Continue to review the cost effectiveness of the central office function (staffing, resources, accommodation).
• Increase the frequency with which we ask those we serve for their input on how the organisation should be run
• Develop a strategic approach to succession planning including drafting and implementing an organisation wide succession plan
• Clarify and develop volunteer roles across Quaker Service
• Develop strategies for drawing on the skills and expertise of our members in key areas.

Delivering the plan

Finance: We project that it will cost a total of £1.5m to implement the plan over three years of which £0.9m is predicted leaving a fundraising target of £0.6m (£200k per annum).

Funding: We aim to have a diverse funding mix comprised:

Operation and fundraising plans will be drawn up to ensure we deliver against our vision, mission, and stated incomes. These will be monitored and reviewed regularly by the Management Board who will ensure that our work is continually underpinned by Quaker ethos and values.

65% trusts and donations
30% statutory
5% other including social economy
Living in a society where people are valued and fulfil their potential