



# *Windsor Women's Centre*

**Annual Report** 2016-2017



# Windsor

In the community, for the community

*Confidence*  
**Women's**  
*Knowledge*  
*Strength*

*Learning*

*Grow*

Windsor women's centre is a place for learning and growing, through education and personal development, women are gaining skills, knowledge and confidence to make a better life for ourselves and our families and to have a stronger voice in the wider community.

# Centre



*Unity*

*Equality*

*Families*

*Opportunities*

*Empowering*

*Advice*

*Childcare*

*Family*

*Skills*

*Community*

*Develop Education*



## Chief Executive Officer Report

Another seminal year in the ongoing life of Windsor Women's Centre. Despite savage cuts to ourselves and many others in the Women's Sector, as well as our 6<sup>th</sup> year of rollover contracts with no uplift, with many of our funders, we continue to deliver work based on the needs of Women and children. We continue to offer a needs-led service due to the extraordinary determination and resilience of our staff team and voluntary Board. I would like to personally thank all these women for their hard work, dedication and commitment to empowering women to claim their rights in this insecure society and the turbulent times ahead.

We continue to engage with representatives from key statutory agencies and the voluntary sector to influence policy and services for women. We are lead body for the family hub 'CASA', for south west Belfast and sit on the Locality Planning Group as well as the community representative on the Childcare Partnership Board for South Belfast. We took part in many consultations and focus groups as we support Women's engagement in decision-making processes. This includes hosting a consultation on where Community Education for Women will fit into Belfast City Council's Community Planning Conversation. We also contributed to S.W. Belfast N.A.P.S. consultation on the Area Action Plan as well as the protect Life Strategy. We work with the South Belfast Partnership Board, elected on to their Community Support group as well as their Suicide Response Group. We took part in several consultations about the Programme For Government with the Department of Education and T.E.O.

This year we engaged with many elected representatives with all the local pre election hustings events and met with Minister for Health, Minister for Education, the Mayor, with visits from Claire Baillie M.I.A. Emma Pengally M.L.A., and the Children's Commissioner and the Director General of Prisons, all to raise our profile and to try to lobby for some stability and sustainability for Women's Centres. We were delighted to win a commendation in the WHO Healthy Cities Awards for Health Equity.

We continue to work strategically with other Women's Centres through the Board of Women's Support Network taking part in research on Housing and Poverty as well as regionally through the consortium. We are also Board members of W.R.D.A. and were involved in their launch of the "Women at the Cutting Edge" report as well as Reclaim The Agenda's "Time To commit" Conference and Action Plan.

South Belfast Surestart plays a very important role within our delivery service and as Chair of the Board we work very closely on many aspects of Early Years.

As Feminists we continue with a shared ethos of teamwork and we all have a vital role to play in maintaining and developing our services to the highest standards we can for equality for Women.

**Chief Executive Officer – Eleanor Jordan**



'Though no one can go back and make a new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending'



## *Live here, Love here Project*

We are very proud of the local children who decided to take action and highlight the problem of dog fouling locally. The Live Here Love Here small grants scheme provided funding for our project to involve the children in designing their own posters which were very creative and certainly made the point! Our Afterschools leaders Janette and Lesley-Anne led the children in a local clean up day, leaving the area one that we all can be proud of.



# ***Petals Day Care & Afterschools Report***

## **Children's Services**

In order to make a real difference to the life chances of children and young people in our area early intervention through investment in early years is crucial. Quality childcare by qualified and dedicated childcare staff which supports parents and enriches children's lives is delivered on site in 3 childcare units with capacity for 130 children using four, two hour sessions a day, for the under 4s and an After-schools project having the capacity for 140 two hour places with 31 children using the service weekly. BBC Children In Need fund the Centre Rise & Shine programme providing all children in our care with breakfast, lunch and healthy snacks. The programme has input from a nutritionist who works with parents to solve the tricky issues and challenges to encourage to eat healthily.

The services delivered by the Childcare department include

- Petals Quality day-care 0 -4
- After-schools club 4 – 11
- Family Support Hub CASA
- Providing support for children with additional needs
- Providing free/affordable childcare for women returning to study/wwork
- Childcare for families through sponsored day care & respite care
- Sure Start places and programmes
- Summer schemes

The Children's Services provided at Windsor Women's Centre is enhanced by the close work we do with other agencies such as Sure start to support children's early years. We hosted a very popular Surestart Parental development programme, a group of 18 parents undertook:

- Managing children's behaviour
- First Aid + personal development
- Baby massage

Our services are "needs driven" and our aim is to respond to the changing needs of children and families in our community by delivering and facilitations the type of support they feel is relevant and useful to their needs. We appreciate the work of our volunteers who participate in much of the work of the Centre and help us to continue to shape our services to the needs of this community. One example of volunteer initiative is the Mummy's together group, this is a group of mum's who have started using the Centre to meet weekly to offer peer support, maternal wisdom and friendship. We hope this group continues to grow and achieve many things.

*'Every child is one caring adult away from being a success story.'*





### What do our service users think?

Emma- 'The Windsor Women's Centre staff always go above and beyond in their roles. They have accommodated me in every crisis. They, as a team, are faultless in the care of my children, they have become a vital support network for my family. They are caring and reliable. They are there for support at all different stages of development and their advice is second to none. I wouldn't go anywhere else.'

Yosra- 'Yosef and Shams have so much change and they are much better because of this great centre. I am really blessed to get much help in my study and children behaviour'

N. Green- 'Myla enjoys coming to nursery. The staff are very friendly and make us feel welcome every time.'

J. Audley- 'Jenson enjoys coming to crèche. Loves playing with other kids, he's learnt a lot while he's been here. All the staff are so nice and friendly.'

Sara- 'Boston loves and looks forward to crèche every week. He has come on so far from joining. He staff are an incredible help and I could not pick a better team to leave my child with. Boston coming here helps me out so much but he also enjoys it so much.'





# BBC Children in Need Project



'Every child is one caring adult away from being a success story.'



# Halloween Fun!





*After schools had a fantastic time on a trip to Corrymeela!*





## Education

The Education department delivers an annual programme of learning opportunities to equip women with knowledge and transferable skills which will improve the quality of their lives, enhance their employment opportunities and in turn benefit their family, the community and society as a whole. There is presently no funding available for community education and this has severely restricted our ability to deliver this service. However in spite of the lack of support we have worked extremely hard at forging partnerships and securing project funding to continue to deliver lifelong learning for women.

In the last year we 139 women participated in our programme of 9 accredited and skills building education & training courses:

CPCAB Level 2 & 3 Certificate in Counselling  
Essential skills in ICT, Literacy & Numeracy  
VTC Level 3 Diploma in Aromatherapy  
ESOL Beginners, Intermediate, Mixed ability E1/E2/E3 Activity programme

97 Women participated in our Active Belfast programme Spring Into Action. This was a fantastic project which enabled women of all ages and abilities to engage in physical activities and learn how to boost their wellbeing with information on good nutrition and learn some family friendly healthy recipes. Activities which were on offer included:

Zumba	Swimming lessons
Pilates	Plot to Plate Cookery classes
Arm-chair Aerobics	Nutritional information
Green Gym	



'Stop saying "I wish" Start saying "I will".'

## What did participants say?



Jackie

"My experience with the Centre is very positive. The staff is warm and friendly. The tutor for my ICT class was very supportive and I will definitely come back do to a higher level of ICT class".

Humaira

"I had a great time when I participated in Zumba class. It benefited me in both ways mentally and physically. I also appreciate all the hard work of the staff in the Windsor Women's Centre and the fact that this class was free of charge."

Annie

"You're never too old to dance"



## Spring into Action.....

The aim of this project was to increase participation of women in physical activity and raise awareness of how to have healthier and happier lifestyles. Our target groups were inactive women .i.e. those women least likely to become involved in healthy living activities without support or appropriate activities to take part in. Our groups comprised of Senior Citizens, ethnic minority women, in-active women and women with long term health conditions.

To facilitate engagement in the project we provided free on-site childcare for participants. Our sessions were delivered by WISPA who have coaches trained to work with women in community settings. We also were mindful of the cultural barriers for some women taking part in sessions and arranged 'women only sessions' for our Somali women's group at our local community gym Fit4life.

Each of our target groups engaged in a range of activities such as Pilates, Zumba, Armchair aerobics and swimming lessons. Integrated with the activities were information sessions delivered by a Nutritionist on key health topics such as the eatwell plate, managing on a budget, as well as sessions of particular relevance to each group e.g. the Senior Citizens had a session on osteoporosis and boosting calcium in the diet.

Team work and challenges kept the participants motivated. Along with cookery demonstrations we provided participants with ingredients to replicate recipes or create new dishes at home for the family and send them to the group. Having such a diverse group of women from ensured we had a wealth of ideas for healthy dishes.

Aligned with the nutritional strand of the project was the cultivation of our community garden. Growing tending and harvesting provided gentle exercise with the restorative power of nature. Participants were guided by a therapeutic horticulturalist from Blossoms Nursery to be aware of how they could nurture their own health and wellbeing as they tended the garden. It also provided us with produce that we use in our cookery sessions and share with the groups.

Veronika Pavelkova  
Rise and Shine Project Co-ordinator



## Spring into Action.....

### What difference did the project make?

The project provided 97 women with a safe space in which to take part in activities and become more aware of how to build healthy habits for both physical and mental health resilience into their daily lives. From a baseline survey and end evaluation 80per cent of 73 participants experienced an improved perception of their health.

Additional benefits of participation were that they widened their circle of social support and had increased confidence to become involved in other community activities and live healthier lives.

### What did participants think?

"It was superb, as childcare was provided I was able to take part in these activities"  
It gave me a great head start and I am going to continue with healthy eating & exercise."

"I was so proud to say I grew this myself"

"I loved Zumba, it made me happy to dance"

"I cook healthier meals for my family"

"I made friends I could go to the Gym with"

The promotion of health and wellbeing is central to our work. Our aim is to enable women in our community to access professional specialist services such as Counselling and therapeutic resilience building activities which are of the highest quality, cost free and with childcare provided; when needed.

This year we delivered  
200 counselling sessions  
350 Complementary therapy sessions  
12 crafts classes  
12 Therapeutic classes

We also held 3 health promotion open days, on topics such as managing stress and anxiety. These are a great opportunity for people to pop in and see who we are and have a look at our facilities, we know it can be very hard to take that first step and come somewhere new.

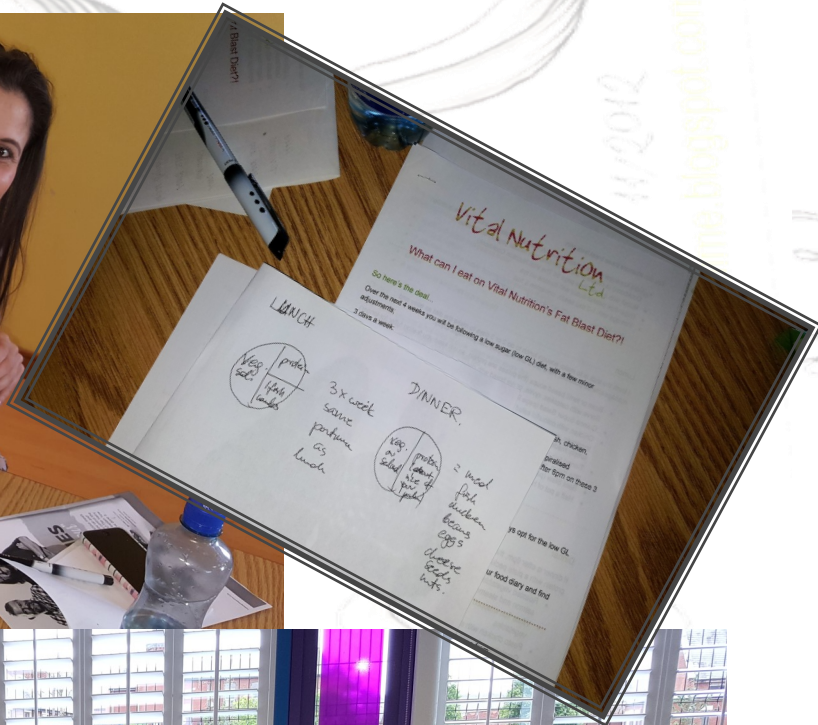
The Therapeutic art group is facilitated by a professional Art therapist. The course ran for 12 sessions and the feedback from participants was very positive, this class is not about becoming proficient as an artist but having a peaceful and supportive environment to relax and express yourself creatively, particularly beneficial when talking is difficult. Some of the group really enjoyed re-connecting with their creativity and loved all the art activities, remembering things they used to do when they were younger (like sketching). Others had never done anything creative like this before and enjoyed learning new skills and new ways of expressing themselves. There was some direction to the activities, but a lot of free space for participants to use the materials as they wished and to express themselves.

The group element was a very important part of the sessions and the relationships developed and deepened over the weeks with participants sharing more of their personal stories and challenges in appropriate ways. Having 12 weeks of sessions was an important element of allowing this deepening journey to happen.

**Martina Magee**  
Programme Manager

*'Stay positive, work hard and make it happen.'*







What would be your message to anyone thinking of joining this class?

"This class was so beneficial to every member of the class. We enjoyed the Art but the Personal development was Amazing. I personally have become more confident and have enjoyed sharing our stories – even more!"

"This class – helps to express your feelings. It changed my life around to a more positive place!"

"Jane has been so knowledgeable on how to encourage the positive side of our nature. She is a really nice person and I look forward to another class PLEASE!!!!"

"You can learn about how to be creative and things that you never knew before. You can say your mind out and then it can help you be happier. All in the group can share their views and learn from each other. I hope next time please bring back Jayne so we can learn new skills and activities".

"We can share between our happiness and sadness"



## Flax Project

With the support of the DFA Reconciliation Fund, a cross community project between Windsor Women's Centre and Footprints Women's centre took place. The project recently concluded with an exhibition in the Crescent Arts centre of textiles produced by the group.

During the project, participants researched the process involved in producing linen from raw flax plant. They also experimented with traditional textile crafts and learnt embroidery, print and patchwork.

The women from the two groups also came together for outings to the Linen Museum in Lisburn and Conway Mill, an old, refurbished flax spinning mill in West Belfast. They also hosted visits to each other's centre, where they shared personal stories and provided guided tours of their premises.

The groups of women bonded so well that further joint ventures have been planned and they are looking forward to a lasting relationship and firm friendship.



"This was a fantastic project, I learnt so much, really fascinating history of our linen industry and what a great bunch of women to know."

"I really loved being involved in this project I learnt such a lot and met some great people"

– Rosie White





## Advice service

Our Advice service continues to be a much needed vital service for many in this community. The introduction of welfare reform have left many people, particularly the elderly and vulnerable, fearful of how these changes will affect them and their families.

We offer an open door service, and a friendly welcome to all who seek our help. No matter how small or large the problem we will endeavor to assist service users with solutions to problems whether that entails signposting to other specialist advice units or to our wide network of organisations and agencies that can support the varied needs of our community.

This year we had 907 Clients and answered 1,010 enquires

We provided Clients with the following services:

### Benefit Advice

We carry out an assessment that will indicate if you are entitled to any benefits, especially if you are elderly or disabled, as new policy changes may be able to provide extra help for you.

### Application help

We help you to fill in applications for benefits and assist in the application process. We can help you respond to requests or contact from benefit providers and keep you informed.

### Financial Advice

Should you find yourself in debt or overwhelmed by your financial commitments we assist with practical steps to put you back in control. We also provide tips on how to better organise your income

### Housing help

If you are having housing problems of any kind, whether you need housing, need repairs or require assistance in any other way, we can help. We can also help with accessing social housing.

Additionally we continue as an Advice unit to contribute to the lobbying for human rights and equality to be central to Government policy. We liaise throughout the year with other agencies to support the vulnerable in this community such as Storehouse who can provide vital food parcels for service users on a six weekly basis and the Salvation Army and Depaul Christmas toy Appeal.

### Advice Opening Times

Mon/Wed/Friday	9.30am until 12.30pm	Drop in Service
Monday/Wed/Friday	1.30pm until 4.30pm	Appointments including home visits
Thursday	1.30pm until 4.30 pm	Outreach at Morton Community Centre.

We can be reached on the following telephone numbers:

02890235451/07590429200.

**Joanne Smit**

'Everything you want is on the other side of fear.'



CITY OF BELFAST

*Office of the Lord Mayor*

# CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

PRESENTED TO

## South Belfast Advice Consortium

In recognition of your outstanding service to your local community. Your tireless efforts and professional service demonstrated by your staff and volunteers is paramount in improving the quality of life for local people.

*Arder Carson*

Arder Carson  
LORD MAYOR OF BELFAST

4 December 2015





# Acknowledgements



Belfast City Council





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