

FOOTPRINTS WOMEN'S CENTRE

ANNUAL REPORT 1993



A YEAR OF GROWTH

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QUOTATION

"Coming together is a beginning;

Keeping together is progress;

Working together is success".

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FORWARD

The Footprints Women's Centre was developed by local women against a background of high unemployment, isolation and political tension. It has emerged as an effective community resource, addressing the needs of women from Poleglass and the surrounding catchment area. The combined efforts of the women themselves and the financial support from funding agencies have contributed towards sustaining and nurturing the growth of 'Footprints'.

Over the last 3 years the women involved in the running of the Centre, working alongside the Co-ordinator have developed resources, and facilities within Footprints, provided courses, workshops and training built links with other women's groups (at a local, national and international level), and also consulted with local women using surveys, interviews, and promotional material, in order to identify and subsequently address needs. All this has taken place against a backdrop of change. The Centre has worked alongside 3 different Co-ordinators since it first received funding for the post.

All this has made for a solid foundation on which to keep on building. The success and difficulties of the past have all contributed in a positive manner to the continued growth of Footprints as a community resource.

"Working together is success", this for us is the next step in our growth. We hold no illusion about the difficulties and changes that lie ahead, but we welcome the challenge that can only enhance and develop the women in particular and the community as a whole.

Aims of Footprints

1. To enable women to recognise their skill and develop to their full potential. To act as a focus and resource for the women of Poleglass;
2. To identify the individual and collective needs of women in the area;
3. To support women in their parenting role through provision of education, advice and training;
4. To improve facilities for women and children by liaising with voluntary and statutory bodies;
5. To act as an advice, women's information and resource centre for individuals and women's groups;
7. To increase women's awareness of statutory and voluntary agencies, of needs of women and of avenues for change.

Christine Lavery

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

This is the second Annual General Meeting of Footprints and this year has seen many changes! The Centre has grown from strength to strength, due to the devoted and hard work of the women of Footprints.

Majella O'Connor had to leave due to personal reasons and Gillian Gibson was appointed in March 1993. Her dedication, enthusiasm and hard work are greatly appreciated and we are delighted to have her as our Co-ordinator. Footprints can only now grow.

We welcome all our new members to the Centre and hopefully Footprints will continue to extend out into the community and reach out to younger single women, young mothers and maturer women. The courses set up have been very successful and continue to extend and widen.

The Creche as always is a great boost to the Centre and allows mums to go to courses in the Centre. It has moved to the craft room and the children now have much more space to play. It has been a welcome move for all.

As always, especially these days, money is a real problem and it is of great concern that the income into the Centre is not good at present and this will have to improve in order that Footprints will be able to survive. The grants which were given to Footprints to establish the Centre in its early years, have now dried up and the Centre will have to become self sufficient. Through the very important fund raising committee, a sub-committee of the womens committee, the income will improve through development of the Thrift Shop, Kitchen, Creche, Courses and special fund raising events, such as the sponsored walk being organised in October.

With everyone's help and support the Footprints will survive and continue to provide an invaluable asset to the community.

Christine Lavery

CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

Last Year, Majella O'Connor, the Centre's Co'ordinator, projected a year of 'excitement, diversity and growth'. Indeed Majella was to lead the Centre towards this goal, laying strong foundations for 1993, and the ongoing expansion of work within Footprints.

As the new and incoming Co-ordinator, I was to enter into the life of Footprints at an opportune time, with the women having completed a significant survey of the Poleglass area to determine the needs of local women. This survey took place under the direction and guidance of Yvonne Cosgrove from Capita Consultancy. Yvonne's work has contributed favourably towards informing and influencing the Centre's direction, particularly with regard to groups which the Centre might target as well as the content of programmes. For that we would like to offer our thanks.

The Women's Committee went on to lay plans for the next 2 years of the Centre's life, enlisting the help of Marie Quiery, who acted as a facilitator in this process. Funded by the N.I.V.T., this proved to be a valuable exercise in moving Footprints into a new phase of growth.

At the same time the Women's Committee also underwent an extensive Management Skills Training programme, backing up their hopes and dreams for the future with practical skills.

Looking back over the short time I have been with Footprints, a mere 7 months, I am amazed at the number of projects the women are linked with, from the development of the Play Area, located at the rear of the Centre, to assisting Barbara Murphy in compiling a community health profile of the Twinbrook/Poleglass area.

Footprint's links with Belfast Women's Training Services have produced a tremendous impact upon the Centre. Resources have been greatly boosted with an Apple Mac Computer, Creche equipment and other training materials. Furthermore, the 'Moving On' course has attracted great interest amongst women in the area with it commencing the 9-week programme, earlier this month.

The launch of the Centre's Autumn Programme is well underway with 166 women registering on a wide variety of courses, many of whom are attending the Centre for the very first time.

They are very welcome and it is hoped that their energy and talents will be channelled into the Centre's ongoing quest to meet the needs of women users.

Within the next year and a half it is expected that the population of Poleglass and Twinbrook will match that of Derry City. With an estimated 52% of the population being female, Footprints Women's Centre has a significant role to play working positively, and on behalf of, women coming in from this catchment area.

The year ahead is not a time to be complacent but a time **"to work together"** towards the common aim of the Centre's survival. Whilst the need for the Centre increases, potential avenues for funding shrink.

We continue to look for support and value the encouragement and help offered to us by the Centre's Management Committee, who have worked steadfastly throughout yet another year of change.

We also offer our thanks to agencies such as the Ulster People's College, the Women's Support Network and the Women's Resource and Development Agency, Business In the Community, Suffolk Action Team and Montupet, all of whom have provided the work of Footprints with ongoing support.

To the volunteers and staff of Footprints I would like to express my personal appreciation of their commitment, humour and dedication.

Finally, I would like to state that I will continue to base my future work in Footprints on the firm belief that women, given space in their lives, exclusive to themselves will have full scope to grow, develop and influence.

Gillian Gibson

CENTRE CO-ORDINATOR

Colette McGibbon - Women's Committee Member

Well its hard to believe a year has passed since our last general meeting, and so much has happened in that time. It has been a year full of emotions. A lot of sadness, and excitement too! Tears were shed when Sr. Mairead left Footprints and Poleglass, to take up parish work in Dublin. This Centre was her dream, and she worked tirelessly to make it a reality. Her belief is that all women have something to offer, that we all have talents, perhaps hidden, that we don't even recognise ourselves, but given the opportunity in a Centre such as this, those talents can be recognised and developed, and that gives you confidence in your self.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all the women who use Footprints to wish her well in her new work in Dublin, and to say thanks.

We were lucky when Sr. Mairead left that we already had Majella as Co-ordinator, who seemed to have that knack of getting women to do things, should it be working voluntary in the Kitchen, or Thrift Shop, or taking part in the classes. Sadly Majella had to leave us and return home to Limerick due to a family bereavment. This was a very sad time for all of us, as Majella had become a good friend - someone who was always there when you needed a friendly ear, or advice. We wish her well in her new job.

Gillian took over as Co-ordinator in March 1993. At that time everyone's morale was very low, and it couldn't have been an easy job to take on, but Gillian being the person she is, recognised this, and her first task was to restore the women's confidence in themselves. That accomplished, a new programme for the Autumn was planned, and with the help of Máire and the new Computer we were able to print the programme ourselves, which we are very proud of!

After a quiet summer, September saw Footprints buzzing again. There is such a wide variety of courses on offer - both educational and social that we have had to open a couple of nights to accommodate them all, and the best news of all is that so many new women have come along and I have no doubt that when they have finished their particular course, they will continue to use the Centre, to go on and do other courses, or just drop in for a cup of tea and chat with their new friends.

Esther took over as Creche Supervisor and with the help of Pauline and Kate rearranged the whole building!! No, seriously it was decided to re-locate the Thrift Shop which was based at Cloona House, back into the Centre. Most of the classes which were held in the big room are now held in Cloona House. Esther decided to take this opportunity to move the Creche into the bigger room, which is bright and spacious and the children have a lot more room to play in. The Creche Staff worked very hard during the summer to have the new creche ready for September, which has paid off. The children love it and if the kids are content, then mum is happy too. These changes seemed to have

have worked out well as the Thrift Shop is doing good business since moving. The layout of the clothes is good and there are plenty of bargains to be found.

On a final note, congratulations to Brenda, who has just started University after successfully completing her 2 year Foundation Course, she has been an inspiration to us all, and we are very proud of her. Good luck in Jordanstown Brenda!

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Anne Campfield - Volunteer

I started coming to Footprints when it first opened but didn't really take much interest in it as I was expecting a baby and didn't really feel up to going. Then out of the blue I decided to go back. I was able to put my two children into the Creche and relax for over two hours. From there, I took a real interest in coming to the Centre. I now take part in some of the courses which are very interesting and worthwhile thanks to Gillian our Co-ordinator who really encouraged me into the courses. I do lunches a few times a week with Margaret for the women which we really enjoy doing.

The Centre has a great atmosphere for anyone who just needs to relax for a few hours and have a conversation and a cup of tea. Last but not least I wouldn't be able to do any of these things but for the kindness of Esther our Creche Supervisor and her assistants Kate and Pauline who are very kind to my children.

-----oOo-----

Josie McDonald - Maths student

In September last year I decided to attend an Adult Basic Education class in Maths. I went to Footprints, a place where I had never been before, with my neighbour Bridie Drain. At once we were made to feel welcome by everyone who attended the Centre and the staff.

Our tutor Fiona Waters was very keen and really gave us confidence, nothing was too much trouble for her. She encouraged us to enter the R.S.A. Stage I in Maths which we sat on the 23rd June 1993. I am pleased to say that the five of us who entered all passed. Karen Pickering and I have now decided to try the G.C.S.E., Maths, which we are taking at Rupert Stanley.

I made many friends at Footprints and I would encourage anyone to use the Centre. Whether it is to attend one of the classes or just call in for a cup of tea and a chat. The staff were great and my children found the creche a great deal of fun. I feel that by using the Centre, my life has changed.



Esther Entertains!



That last swing is mine. Hands off!

Esther Kilfin - Creche Supervisor

I started working in Footprints Creche on 12th October 1992 almost a year ago. Kate and Pauline started a week later and I am going to miss their 'craic' when they leave next week. They have been a great help and have helped me to settle in a lot easier. The children love them and they are going to be missed by parents and children alike. Hopefully the two new ACE workers will be half as good as them.

Majella left shortly after Christmas which left a great void in the Centre. I miss her friendship and the work she put into the Centre. Gillian has also become a friend and does all she can and more to help and support me when called upon.

One of the best things to happen this year is the move to the craft room. As we try to provide the children with a bright, cheerful environment, the new room has made this a lot easier. The space enables us to put out a greater variety of toys and equipment which contribute to the children's development.

During the summer we were able to purchase new equipment for the Creche which included:-

Sink and cooker for the house corner, jigsaws, magnetic blocks, stickle bricks which will help develop hand/eye co-ordination skills.

The numbers have increased this year but it is always great to meet new children and to think that in some small way we helped in their development and gave their mothers the opportunity to return to study or just get a break from their children.

Lastly, I would like to thank the mothers for the support and co-operation they have shown.

FOOTPRINTS - ONE YEAR ON

Brenda Stewart - Women's Committee member

I joined Footprints Women's Centre with little confidence and a yearning to get out of the house. Gradually, I realised that I was capable of doing a lot more with my life. It began with attending different classes and taking part in meetings.

Realising my opinions really did mean something, my confidence in myself grew and I realised that I could choose what I wanted to do with my life. I'd always wanted to go back to school and get some qualifications that would eventually lead to a half decent job. But now I wanted more, I wanted to give back some of what I had gained through my experience with Footprints.

In May, 1993 I completed a two-year part-time Foundation Course. This enabled me to apply to University and study for a degree.

On Monday 27 September, 1993, I started a Degree Course in Community Youth Work at the University of Ulster, Jordanstown. I feel a great sense of achievement in what I have chosen to do with my life, yet I don't feel exceptional. The support and friendship I have experienced at Footprints has enabled me to work through the 'doubting times' and the 'giving up times'.

Being a part of Footprints has encouraged me to grow as a person in my own right, it has also helped me realise that "ordinary" women can do exceptional things. All they need is a place like Footprints and belief in themselves.

-----oOo-----

Mary Fox - Maths Student

When I first heard Footprints were having a tutor in to teach Maths, I thought great, this would help me understand the childrens' homework better and I would be able to help them instead of them showing me how it's done. It has changed so much since I was at school. Division, multiplication, fractions even addition have different methods or should I say formulas.

There were about 12 girls to begin with and we met our tutor Fiona, who made you feel at ease right away. You were not embarrassed asking questions as we were all in the 'same boat'. We were aiming for our R.S.A. Stage 1. There were two papers involved, the first was a lot easier than the second.

We were never once put under pressure to do the exam, it was left entirely up to the individual. Nearing the time of the exam Fiona gave us all the help and support we needed and for that we were very grateful.

The morning of the exam itself we were pretty nervous as it was held up in Rupert Stanley College on the Whiterock Road, (it felt like school for the first time). Well we all survived the exam and met out in the Foyer and there was a large bottle of wine waiting for us from Fiona, wasn't that nice? Well 6 of us sat the exam and we all passed, 2 got distinctions and 1 got a credit. It has now given us the confidence to go further, not just in Maths, and not just for our children but for ourselves too.

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Mary, Marlene, Colette - Thrift Shop Volunteers

Our Thrift Shop is based at Footprints Women's Centre and is opened mornings from 10.30 - 12.30 midday. We provide good quality clothing, household items for al the family. This service is used by quite a number of men and women who enjoy the keen prices. We provide a helpful and friendly service in a relaxed atmosphere.

Why not drop in and enjoy a cup of tea while browsing around the shop. All proceeds to towards the upkeep of the Centre. If you wish to donate any of the above items it would be greatly appreciated and would keep us towards the running costs which benefits the local community. We look forward to seeing you!

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Pauline Hickland - Reflections

When I first came to Footprints I came as a member, to do English and Maths and from that I got an ACE post in the Creche. At first I found it hard to stay in the Creche all day but as time went by I began to enjoy working with the children, as the ages were varied, each day was very different. We, that is Esther the Supervisor, Kate and myself got to know each child in different ways. We worked as a team and got on very well.

The move from the original room to the craft room in the Centre has made a great difference to us and the children, as it is a bigger and brighter room. We have been able to provide new toys and more are in the pipeline. My year is almost up and I have it enjoyed it very much and I hope to start to do more courses.



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seen myself in this role

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forward to the challenge of...

Kate Higgins - Cross Community

For 2 years now I have been involved with other women from Footprints and the Community, in Cross Community relations with Windsor Women's Centre. Every year we have a residential weekend away where we participate in Quizzes and Work Shops and a Social night out.

Last year we were in Benburb and this year Port Noo in Donegal. I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was a good experience meeting different people, sharing together, learning from each other and of course the 'crack' was great.

In between the residentials, we also go on a number of outings which consist of, Theatre, Bowling, Quizzes and a Barbeque. Everyday contact is usually on the phone and also visiting each other's Centre for coffee mornings and the occasional class.

We have formed a bond which I hope continues for many years to come.

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Bridie Drain - Sewing Tutor

My first encounter to Footprints was to brush up on my Maths, in a kind of comfortable, informal setting, as I would not have gone straight to a formal class structure. My anxiety was eased by the friendly and casual atmosphere.

During my time at Footprints a few people remarked that they heard I made my own clothes, and commented on clothing myself and young daughter were wearing which I happened to have made myself. A suggestion by Esther and Pauline that I would be able to take a sewing class to Gillian is what I now find myself doing.

With a lot of apprehension and no formal training the class began 27th September with 7 in the class. Everyone seemed very keen, which allayed by anxiety and the reassurance that others want to join has given me great confidence.

I am looking forward to continuing and passing on my knowledge. I look forward to giving others the self confidence to make their own things. The taking on of the class has increased my self confidence, as a year previous I would not have seen myself in this role.

Hopefully, I will impart the enjoyment of sewing your own creations. I look forward to the challenges of the year ahead.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the women of Footprints I would like to thank the Ulster Peoples' College for their time and skill in helping to make this report a reality I would like to extend grateful appreciation to Liam McAnoy, Brigid McAnoy, Florence McKee for their courtesy and assistance during the compilation of this report.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who took part in our activities, particularly the tutors from the W.E.A., Rupert Stanley College, Whiterock and Lisburn Technical College.

But most of all we would like to thank the women of Footprints for their enthusiasm and support throughout the year.

FUNDERS

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British Telecom

Catholics Caring Trust

Children In Need

Community Relations - Lisburn Council

Department of Health & Social Services

Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust

Shell Better Britain

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ORGANISATIONS

Belfast Women's Training Services

Business In The Community

Capita Consultancy

Dairy Farm

Lisburn Technical College

Montupet UK Ltd

Nativity ACE Scheme

Play Resource Warehouse

Rupert Stanley Further Education College - Whiterock

Suffolk Community Houses

Women's Resource and Development Agency

Women's Support Network