

# footprints

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## MUM'S AND KIDS PROJECT EVALUATION

MAY 2010



# VISION

Footprints Vision is to eradicate inequities that impact upon the lives of women and children.

# MISSION STATEMENT

To enable women and children to grow to ensure their voices are heard and that they can take their rightful place in a just and equal society.

## ORGANISATION BACKGROUND

Footprints Women's Centre is a charitable organisation and has provided services for women and children within the Colin Neighbourhood since 1991. The Centre has evolved from a strong self-help ethos and operates within a Community Development context.

The Centre is acknowledged as a valuable asset within the community and has developed a diverse range of services to meet the distinct needs of women and children living within the Colin Neighbourhood. Footprints Women's Centre operates as a Social Enterprise. The income generated allows us to develop and pilot support services to benefit the most vulnerable women and children within the community.

Footprints operates out of a purpose built facility and also provides outreach programmes across the Colin Community. The Centre works with up to 400 women and 90 children per week. Footprints employs 38 staff and is managed by a voluntary Board of Directors comprising of 7 local women and 4 professional women with expertise in particular areas of interest.





# executive summary

## INTRODUCTION

Footprints Women's Centre was established in 1991 to provide services and activities to meet the distinct needs of women and children living in Colin. The Colin area is located in Outer West Belfast and covers Poleglass, Twinbrook, Lagmore and Kilwee, serving a population of in excess of 25k. Over the years membership of the centre increased and women clearly identified parenting support as a key priority.

The Centre has always prioritised the development of innovative approaches to working with, and engaging the most vulnerable mothers and children. Examples of these are the Young Parents Network, (1995 – 1999), and 'Investing in Healthier Communities' project, (2001 – 2005). This work led to the organisation receiving the regional 'Impact on Healthier Communities Award' from Glaxo Smith Kline (2005). Footprints has also been to the forefront in carrying out action research projects that challenge perceptions and improve existing services. The Refresh research project (2005) is one such publication that effected government policy

In 2004 Footprints developed a number of Mums and Kids Cookery Programmes. This innovative programme involved mothers and children having fun and learning together, supported by staff or volunteers who modelled positive parenting behaviours. Self referral was essential to the success of this project and this was a crucial first step in the empowerment of parents.

These activities operated alongside a 'rolling' infant massage programme which encouraged bonding and attachment between mums and newborn babies. Both programmes were very popular with mothers. Footprints identified that the key to success was for Mums to have uninterrupted quality time with their children.

The policy and community context, at this time, was beginning to shift, with a growing focus upon parenting. The Family Matters Regional Strategy (2009) from government and the local Neighbourhood Renewal plan (Nov 2003) provided a greater emphasis on the need for parenting support. This enhanced the environment for

the Mums and Kids project to develop. Through CNP, Footprints had a local forum in which to influence practice and strategies through the Family Focus Task Group.

In 2005, following the incubation of the 'Mum's and Kids' project, funded by Footprints Women's Centre through their own income generation, BBC Children In Need awarded a grant of £54,666 to help fund the Mum's and Kids programme with their contribution tapering off over a 3 year period. A Service Level Agreement with a local school generated an income of £9k which contributed towards an extended schools programme delivered by Footprints at St Luke's Primary School, Twinbrook.





# AIMS

## THE MUM'S AND KIDS PROJECT AIMED TO:

- Improve parenting skills,
- Increase the awareness of healthy living issues.
- Empower parents and children to have a voice.
- Empower parents to make positive choices leading to better outcomes for their children and families.
- Increase access to mainstream services.
- Provide opportunities for young girls to identify their needs enabling them to develop life skills.

# ACTIVITIES

## DURING A 3 YEAR PERIOD ACTIVITIES INCLUDED

Infant, baby and toddler  
massage programmes.

Two Mother and Toddler  
Groups with input from a  
speech and language therapist.

A programme  
in St Luke's  
Primary School  
Parent's Centre.

Healthy eating  
programmes including  
Healthy Food for Toddlers,  
Slow Food for Families,  
Food is Fun, Junior Cook it,  
Healthy Lunch Boxes.

Physical activities  
including the 'Big toddler  
for Barnardo's', a Walk  
and Talk programme,  
swimming lessons at  
the local leisure centre.

Programmes  
for parents of  
older children  
included Drug  
awareness,  
Tough Issues  
and Parent's  
Promoting  
Sexual Health.

Information sessions on  
bonding and attachment,  
internet and e mail safety,  
dental hygiene, weaning,  
walk and talk, Irish nursery  
rhymes, speech and language.





# THE PROJECT STARTED IN APRIL 2006

Workshops in positive attitudes, active emotions, 40 winks, rhyme time, accident prevention, home safety checks, road safety, baby car safety, disability and play and reading with your children.

A Young Girls group (13-15yrs) run by volunteers with 8 girls with a range of activities including felt making, discussion, music and a drugs awareness programme.



Creative activities including African drum circle, creative dance, drama, the story teller man, music therapy, art and crafts.

Emergency First Aid for parents.

Provision for children with autism including music therapy and sensory play sessions for the local Autism Support Group and support for the ADHD group for parents.

Environmental activities including bird box building, Colin Glen Forest Park Fossil Trail.

Trips out together to Belfast Zoo at Christmas, Clements Mount Farm, W5, Carnfunnock Country Park, Halloween Enchanted Evening, Tour of Belfast City Centre, Continental Market, St George's Market, Chinese supermarket.



Respite care places in Footprints childcare services.

A Parents forum.



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# EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation took place between May and September 2009. Interviews took place with 18 service users – 13 women and 5 children, with 6 members of staff, 2 tutors, one volunteer and 8 local community and statutory organisations.

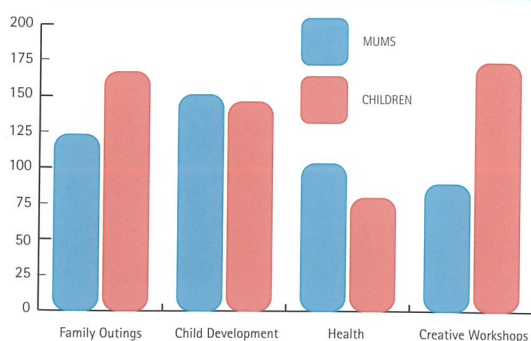
## USER NUMBERS

It was anticipated that there would be 350 mothers and children would benefit from the project. The actual number was 352 adults and 432 children.

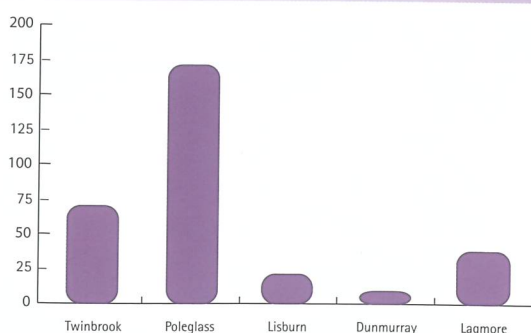
## PROJECT OUTCOMES

The evaluation evidenced how the project had produced results in a number of areas, which are highlighted through the quotes from service users below:

### Activities



### Location of participants



## BONDING AND ATTACHMENT

'I learnt how to speak to and relate to my kids.'

## BETTER LEARNING AND ATTAINMENT

'We learnt that playing with them helps their brain develop and that they learn more when they are under 5. We learnt about bonding. We learnt not to let them watch too much TV – just some programmes.'

## BETTER BEHAVIOUR AND CONDUCT

'She was a completely different child during the trips and the cookery sessions. She wasn't constantly in my face and she had the freedom to do her own thing – I wasn't worried about her. And I was more relaxed with her – she's not as bad as I think she is. And I was just like all the other mummies instead of the one who can't cope.'

## BETTER FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

'I learnt about sharing the parenting role – I wanted to be the mummy and I wouldn't let him do anything.'

## IMPROVED PARENTING CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS

'There's no blueprint for first time mothers – I didn't know how to hold or bathe the baby or how to wean her – there's so much to learn. I like learning from others;

'I don't worry about the cleaning so much – I used to spend the whole day cleaning.'

## INCREASED AWARENESS OF HEALTH ISSUES

'I learnt how to cook in the house on a budget – we hardly ever have chips now and it used to be every night. I make more pasta dishes.'



## PARENTS AND CHILDREN EMPOWERED TO HAVE A VOICE

'Now I have a voice in the house and in the relationship; I used to do things for a quiet life and then blow up with frustration.'

'I learnt to treat my kids with more respect.'

## PARENTS EMPOWERED TO MAKE POSITIVE CHOICES LEADING TO BETTER OUTCOMES FOR THEIR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

'If it wasn't for mums and kids, and I hadn't been able to get out and talk to other women, I would be in a mental house now. Being a parent is the hardest job and I felt useless.'

## FAMILIES ENABLED TO ACCESS MAINSTREAM SERVICES

'They had all these different professional people to give us information.'

'The speech and language therapist picked up an issue early and it was dealt with.'

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG GIRLS TO IDENTIFY THEIR NEEDS ENABLING THEM TO DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS

They came with a vision and an agenda – they wanted to get on and do well. They were hungry for opportunities for self development.

It laid out a path for them – a better sense of who they were and where they wanted to go.



# CONCLUSIONS

## 1. ACHIEVING THE AIMS

The project succeeded in its aims. There is clear evidence that it improved parenting skills, increased awareness of healthy living issues, empowered mothers and children to make positive choices and enabled families to access mainstream services. Parents gained a better understanding of their children's needs, of how to support them, and of how to encourage them to become independent learners.

## 2. CONSOLIDATING THE WORK

The project enabled Footprints Women's Centre to develop expertise and skills in family support work. A strong team and service links are now in place. In addition, developments within the statutory sector such as the South Eastern Children's Services Outcomes Board, Family Support Packages and the new Families Matter policy will enable the organisation to consolidate its work in this area.

## 3. PRACTICE AND ENGAGEMENT

The project succeeded in engaging a large number of parents including 'hard to reach' families with severe difficulties. As a result the organisation has firmly established its position as a family support resource in the Colin area. This is important because other mainstream programmes such as Colin Sure Start provide universal services that do not necessarily target the most vulnerable and at risk.

## 4. DEVELOPING THE SUCCESS OF THE OUTREACH WORK

The outreach work to other local centres was highly valued by stakeholders in the area who viewed it as a priority for future development.

## 5. PROMOTING THE SUCCESS OF POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT

Given the research evidence from the field, that the biggest influence on parenting is maternal mental health, the project's focus on providing positive family experiences and opportunities to access longer term support will enhance long term outcomes for families.

## 6. ADDED VALUE FOR FUNDERS AND INVESTORS

The organisation added significant value to the project by using substantial resources already in place within the organisation, as well as its relationships with community, voluntary and statutory organisations throughout the Colin area.

## 7. INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The project succeeded in including children with a range of disabilities and their families because of the proactive approach of staff and the high quality facilities of the centre, together with an established history of working with children with disability.

## 8. MONITORING IMPACT

The project could have collected more data on its impact and value through the use of continuous interview based monitoring systems, focused on impact, in addition to the evaluation forms and focus groups that were in place.

## 9. PROVISION OF INFORMATION

The project enabled parents to gain valuable information about key aspects of parenting and child care.



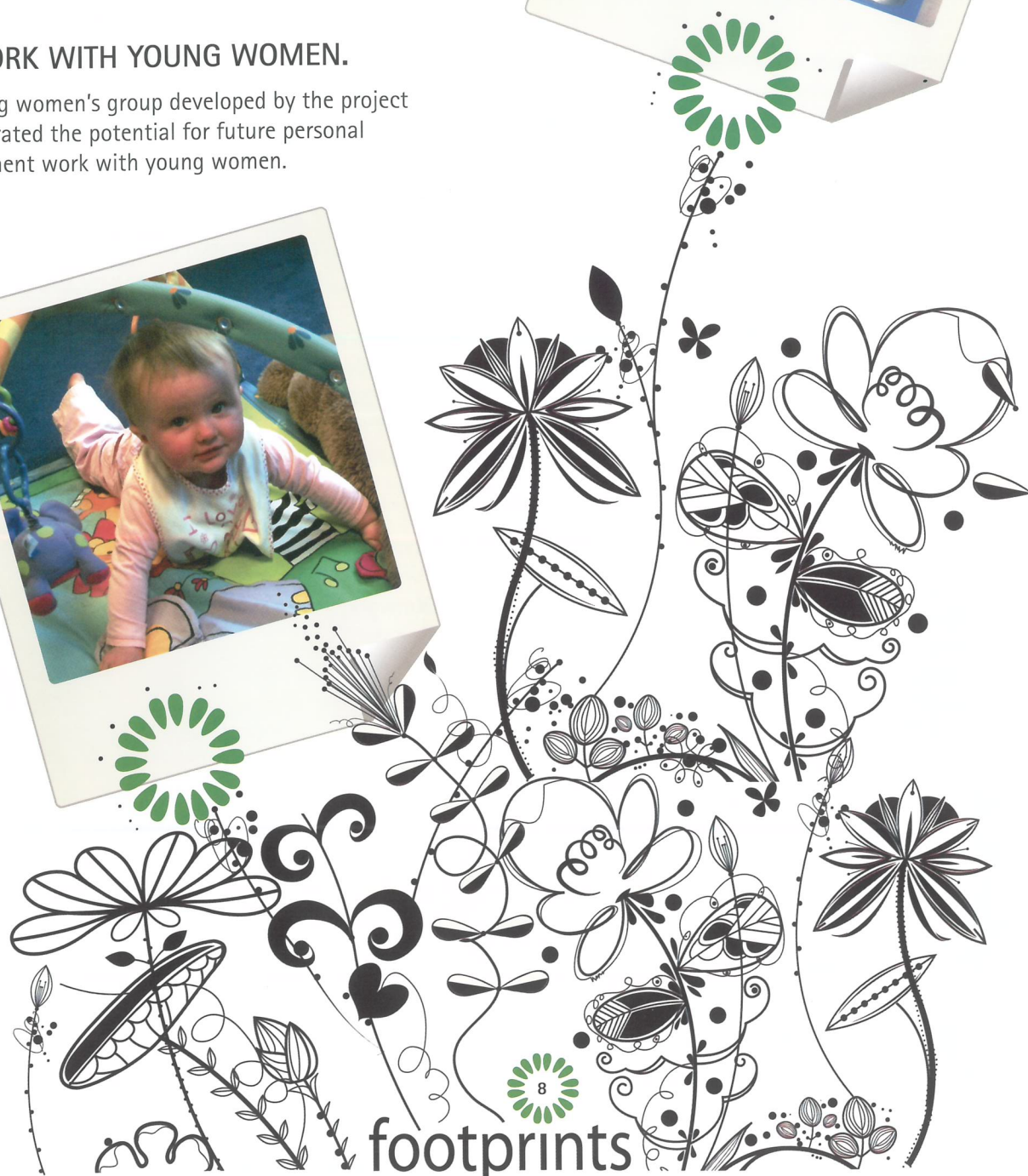
## 10. SCHOOL BASED PARTNERSHIP WORK

It appears that school based partnerships would be more likely to succeed if the challenges involved, in terms of delivery and governance, were more widely understood by stakeholders. In terms of this project the work in the primary school was effective in engaging hard to reach families and developing their parenting skills.



## 11. WORK WITH YOUNG WOMEN.

The young women's group developed by the project demonstrated the potential for future personal development work with young women.



- Identify ways for project users to promote the service.
  - Organise meetings for key referrers in community and statutory organisations, such as Health Visitors and on-site meetings with Health Trust staff.
  - Working closely with the new Colin Live and Learn Parents Link Worker and Father's Development Worker.
  - Continuing to disseminate ideas and approaches to mainstream providers such as the Health Trust and Sure Start.
10. The project should promote the availability of information to pregnant women and mums on issues such as the impact of bonding and attachment on brain development, the benefits of interaction and play etc. (noting that 24% of the overall population function at the lowest level of literacy). The new infant mental health pilot project with pregnant women will provide a good opportunity.
11. Footprints should continue to identify future opportunities to work in partnership with local schools which are consistent with service integrity, ethos and quality standards.
12. Footprints should seek future opportunities to develop work with young women, consistent with the organisation's strategy and ethos, to meet and identify gap improvisation.



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