

first steps

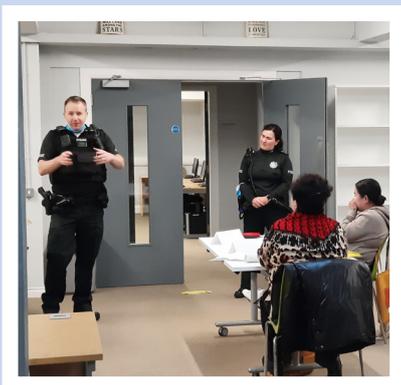
Women's Centre

Annual Report 2021 - 2022



**first
steps**
Women's Centre
Support. Educate. Empower.

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**first
steps**

Women's Centre
Support. Educate. Empower.

Chair's Report

Louise Mallon, Chairperson

This is my second year as Chair of First Steps Women's Centre (FSWC). It began in Lockdown but ended with a huge sigh of relief as we neared to a Post-Covid normality.

This report highlights the amazing work that began in Lockdown in April 2021 and yet finished with a real sense of normality by March 2022 with a return to inhouse programmes. FSWC was well prepared for the second lockdown. We had set up online systems, trained staff, tutors and students on how to engage in an online teaching environment just in case a new wave struck.

You will see from the content of this report that FSWC almost met its European Social Fund (ESF)/ Department for the Economy (DfE) targets of 220. FSWC achieved 202 which is 92% of the target.

FSWC developed a number of partnerships during this year. Mid Ulster Council was able to commit to funding FSWC in Call 3 of ESF/DfE which will begin in April 2022. This was achieved through the work of the Senior Management Team within FSWC who met with the Council on a number of occasions during the year.

FSWC also worked with Queen's University, Ulster University and South West College. Queen's University worked with a group of migrant and local women on a project around exclusion and inclusion. Ulster University delivered "Unblocking Potential" at FSWC to a group of 8 women.

In addition to these partnerships FSWC was able to continue to develop its Allotment project. Help for this came through generous funding from the Donnelly Group.

In January this year FSWC recruited a volunteer counsellor to provide much needed support to women in need. The need for Counselling was evidenced through the FSWC COVID Recovery Survey undertaken. The counselling has worked well providing 35 sessions in the first 3 months of 2022.

Strategy

Our focus for this year has been to ensure that our ESF project, Women Toward Education & Employment (WTEE) funded by ESF and DfE, was able to operate, adhering to Government COVID 19 requirements, through a blended learning approach. The Centre reopened to students in September 2021 when Wellbeing and Lifeskills programmes commenced. All IT courses remained online while the Centre returned to a reduced number of face-to-face courses with Social Distancing rules in place. These regulations meant that place numbers had to be reduced. This also had an impact on childcare numbers and attendance. From January to February 2022 childcare attendance was at its lowest, but this improved by the end of March.

End of ESF but not the end of First Steps Women's Centre

As I write this report I have to reflect over the past two years in which I have been Chair. COVID 19 has had an overwhelming impact on the past two years on us all. Hopefully the World is now in a much safer place. I have to give praise, thanks and a lot of credit to the team within FSWC. They kept the place going. They were the ones who came up with innovative ways of meeting and coping with the challenges.

There is now another challenge which lies ahead. The European Social Fund will completely cease in March 2023 and with that there will be a huge financial gap to fill. The Senior Management Team has worked diligently in planning and preparing for life after ESF. It was Ghandi who once said "*The future depends on what we do in the present*" and I would add that it also depends on what we have done in the past. FSWC is utilising the results of the massive COVID Recovery Survey it compiled in March 2021. The evidence from this is being used to compile a large 5-year application to the National Lottery. Already FSWC has succeeded in getting through two phases of this process. The application is being fine-tuned and I have no doubt will provide much needed stability.



During the past 12 months, FSWC provided 480 places for women across 50 different courses. That is 200 places more than the previous year. It is still less than the previous year before COVID 19 had gained momentum.

I would like to thank all of the funders, the Board, the participants, the tutors, the volunteers and the staff who have made the Centre a place of welcome, a place to make friends, a place to learn, a place to gain confidence, and a place to tell others about.

First Steps Women's Centre is a Centre in the heart of the community for the community.

Louise Mallon
Chairperson

First Steps Women's Centre Board of Directors 2020-21

Chair	Louise Mallon
Vice Chair	Katalin Hajdu
Treasurer	Katalin Hajdu
Secretary	Maria McGilly
Director	Helen O'Donnell
Director	Paula Smyth
Director	Geraldine McAuley
Director	Edel Cunningham
Director	Wendy Wigton
Director	Mary O'Neill
Director	Siobhan Wallace
Director	Janice McMullan

Chief Executive's Report

Michael McGoldrick, Chief Executive

Turning the Corner

The start of this financial year began exactly the same way the last one had ended! Covid-19 Lockdown!!

First Steps Women's Centre was operating an online only presence from January to June 2021. It was not until the start to a new year that anyone wanted, but the staff at FSWC were prepared. They swung straight into action with a full online programme. FSWC had learned lessons from the previous lockdown and provided a huge online presence across IT, Wellbeing and Lifeskills.

FSWC continued to adhere to the NI Government lockdown until the end of July 2021. All staff returned at the end of July, and immediately commenced recruitment for September 2021. The target for the ESF Programme was 220, but by the middle of August only 41 applications had been received.

Time to panic?

No, not at FSWC. FSWC had over 10,000 leaflets delivered across Armagh, Cookstown, Moy, Dungannon and other areas within Mid Ulster as well as implanting new promotion methods on buses and radio.

Turning the corner

Following a swift downturn in numbers between 2020-21, FSWC has now witnessed an even more dramatic upturn. The number of course places provided has increased by a massive 103% compared to 2020-21. The number of courses and programmes provided jumped from 38 to 50, a 31% increase.

There is a marked trend of women seeking to get out of the house/home, seeking to break away from the tough memories of Lockdown. It was inevitable that demand at FSWC increased. Things began to feel a bit more normal although there was still some nervousness about and FSWC retained all of its Social Distancing and Covid-19 precautions.

Investing in Staff & Volunteers

FSWC considers itself to be a Centre of Excellence for staff, volunteers, students and children. As part of our ambition to maintain this approach FSWC staff attended 53 training course/programmes during the year. These ranged from Childcare, First Aid, Covid Infection, GDPR, Online Marketing and many others.

Strategy - End of the European Social Fund programme

Our ESF programme will end in March 2023. This will mean a loss of around £287k per annum out of a budget of £450k-£500k.

The Board and Senior Management Team have sought to identify replacement funding to retain the valuable services within FSWC. During this past 12 months FSWC has identified funding from other streams to fill the shortfall. The strategy for FSWC is to continue to develop its Community Relations and Community Development programmes. This approach has been based on the evidence of need identified in our own survey in 2021 and also national and local statistics that outline mental health, isolation, loneliness and physical health as major areas of need.

In January 2022, FSWC made an initial application to the National Lottery under the People and Communities funding programme. The aim of this application is to seek funding to grow our provision. Since the end of Lockdown there has been a significant and steady growth in demand for our Wellbeing programmes. If successful the National Lottery funded programme would provide 308 places per year into Wellbeing programmes. It would also enable 30 women to attend counselling through the Centre.

Community Relations

Over the past 5 years FSWC has been investing in Community Relations programmes. These were aimed at local and migrant women coming together to learn, share and understand the different



cultures within FSWC. There have been 11 different nationalities attending FSWC during the past year. It really is a cosmopolitan and multi-cultural place to learn. FSWC believes in the importance of sharing experiences and gaining understanding of the different cultures that attend the Centre. FSWC is in a central position to develop and to work alongside women to develop sound and effective Community Relations programmes.

Ulster University, Queen's University and South West College

I am delighted to state that these three learning institutions came to FSWC to teach and facilitate programmes. Queen's University facilitated an innovative programme called "Photo Voices" aimed at exploring exclusion and inclusion from a migrant and local perspective. Ulster University hosted the "Unblocking Potential" Level 3 Course whilst South West College provided a tutor for Essential Skills in Literacy.

Funders

I would like to thank, the European Social Fund, the Department for the Economy, the Department for Communities, Department for Health, The Executive Office, Public Health Agency (through Clear Project), Tesco Ground Works, Arnold Clarke Autom, Ecclesiastical Movement For Good, Co-Operation Ireland, Garfield Weston, 29th May 1961 CT, The Pathway Fund, Mid Ulster Council, Charity Aid Foundation, The Volant Charitable Trust and The Community Foundation NI for the funding awarded to First Steps Women's Centre. Also, thanks to Vodafone for providing participants with free Sim Cards. Without the funding, our staff, volunteers and tutors would not have been able to achieve the fantastic targets that they have reached.

Thanks

Finally, I would like to thank all the staff, Directors and volunteers who made this year a great year not only for the women but for the whole community.



Michael McGoldrick

Life Skills

In the period April 2021 to March 2022 there were 182 places provided for ESOL, Pre-ESOL and English classes. The ESOL programmes included Speaking & Listening, Reading & Writing and PRE-ESOL. Additional subjects included Essential Skills Class. Class sizes ranged from 16-21 in ESOL classes to 13 in Essential Skills.

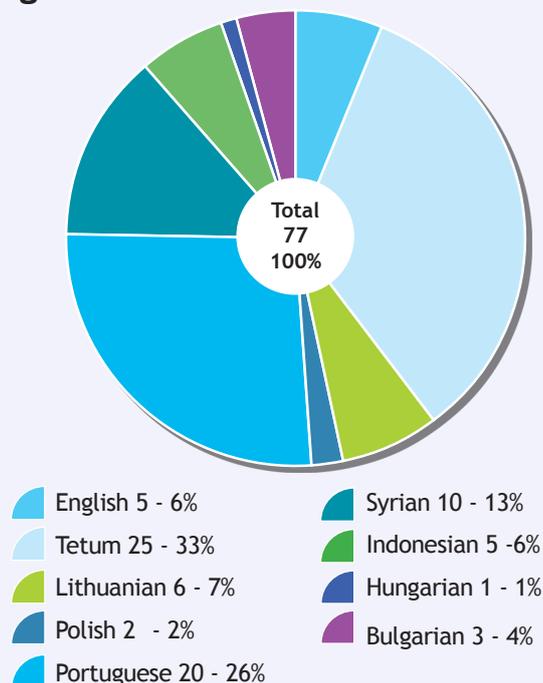
There was a total of 71 qualifications/awards achieved with an overall pass rate of 94%

Table below shows Statistics for Retention

Class	Overall Rate of Retention annually
EL1	62%
EL1 & 2	75%
EL3	75%
Level 1	29%
PRE-ESOL	90%
Entry Level 2 Reading	100%
Improving English Skills	85%
VIBE-Armagh	100%
Average	82%

FSWC saw new participants from different nationalities including Syria, Bulgaria and Indonesian and a number of Eastern European countries.

Migrant Nationalities at end of March 2021



English: Improving Your English Skills

First Steps Women Centre is currently not a registered Centre for Essential Skills. However we are working in conjunction with the South West College to offer both learning and qualifications in Essential Skills for Literacy.

This year we had 13 students in the Literacy Class with an 85% attendance both in class and on Zoom. FSWC believes in the importance of offering students a learning opportunity without qualifications, with social interaction in a place where they feel confident and welcomed.

2021 -2022 Emerging from Covid Restrictions

Back in April 2021, all classes were still taking place remotely on Zoom and this was to continue until June 2021. Zoom had advantages and disadvantages for the students and tutors. Zoom allowed classes to continue during the pandemic as per the normal training plan at a time when the Centre itself was closed under Covid Restrictions. Students learnt about new technology with some using Zoom for the first time. The Centre assisted students to use their existing technologies and where none was available students were assisted with the loan of a laptop. In June 2021 The TAG (Teacher Assessed Grade) Process of teacher-based assessment was used with 20 students availing of the process to obtain their ESOL and Essential Skills qualifications.

However, in September 2021 Covid Restrictions had lifted sufficiently for classes to return to the in-house Centre arrangements. Students were eager to return to the classroom setting where they could learn away from the distractions of home-schooling and household chores. The Centre offered the opportunity again to learn in a student focused environment.



It was however a different Centre that the students returned to. Students were required to adhere to a Covid Hygiene Safety Policy. Students were asked to sanitise their hands in Reception, temperatures were taken and social distancing was employed. Training rooms were cleaned before and after use and students could wear face masks if they wished. Many students missed their tea breaks and the social interaction that came with this. ESOL students missed the conversations at this time and the valuable interaction they had with students from other countries.



In November 2021 we began to prepare again for the possibility of a return to Lockdown and to Zoom. Students were helped with Zoom training and the offer of laptops if needed. Vodafone donated Sim Cards with free data for students and students were given packs of learning material. Fortunately, these preparations were not required as we continued with our classes in the Centre.



In March 2022, we completed our first inhouse exams since June 2019. There was a real sense of normality returning. The social area returned to a place for students to sit and chat between classes. It was also noticeable that levels of optimism were improving as we emerged from the Pandemic

Visit to Atlas Women's Centre

On 23rd March 2022 the Wednesday group of Pre - ESOL students visited Lisburn Atlas Centre, another Women's Centre with similar training programmes. They were able to chat with the staff, committee and other students who attended there. They were treated to a lovely lunch, a tour of the Centre, creche and the lovely garden centre and sitting areas. They were able to listen to the Centre Manager talk about the classes available, achievements of their students and see first hand some of their lovely arts and crafts and gardening work. It is important to build links and relationships with other Centres as we can learn from their best practices and what works well for them may also benefit our Centre.



Life Skills

Pre-ESOL

In September 2021, Theresa Boyle commenced as our new PRE-ESOL Tutor. One day a week Theresa worked with students who had more initial learning needs that would allow them to access Entry Level 1 and its qualification route. Some students were new to Northern Ireland, some had a poor experience of learning in their own countries and some were lacking in confidence and would benefit from learning in a smaller group. This has worked really well for the students with those benefitting wanting to progress at the end of the year. The students were from Portugal, Cape Verde, Angola and East Timor.

Lifeskills Qualifications ESOL

In 2021 to 2022 year 71 Qualifications were achieved. This represented an overall pass rate of 80%.

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic and ongoing Covid Restrictions there were no formal exams held in 2021. In June 2021 a method of processing exams TAG (Teacher Assessed Grade) Process using Calculated Results was employed. This process used existing evidence, banked assessment results and teacher predicted grades to allow students to progress to the next level of learning if that would have occurred without the existence of the Pandemic. This enabled students who needed the qualifications for education or employment purposes to achieve their goal. With the lifting of some restrictions in March 2022, we were able to offer Speaking & Listening exams in a classroom setting again.

Exams Taken	Total Nos achieved	% Pass rate exam entrants
ESOL Entry L1 Speaking & Listening 2021	4	100%
ESOL Entry L2 Speaking & Listening 2021	2	100%
ESOL Entry L3 Speaking & Listening 2021	3	100%
Entry Level 1 Speaking & Listening 2021	4	100%
ESOL Entry Level 1 Reading 2021	5	100%
ESOL Entry level 2 Reading 2021	5	100%
ESOL Entry level 3 Reading 2021	3	100%
ESOL Level 1 Reading 2021	5	100%
ESOL Entry Level 1 Writing 2021	6	100%
ESOL Entry Level 2 Writing 2021	4	100%
ESOL Entry Level 3 Writing 2021	3	100%
ESOL Level 1 Writing 2021	5	100%
ESOL Entry L1 Speaking & Listening 2022	6	50%
ESOL Entry L2 Speaking & Listening 2022	6	46%
ESOL Entry L3 Speaking & Listening 2022	8	100%
Entry L1 Speaking & Listening 2022	2	100%
Total	71	94%



Improving English group having a relaxing coffee break with their Tutor Michael Murphy



Visit to Atlas Women's Centre

Life Skills Testimonials

PRE-ESOL

“Before this course I was very nervous and I couldn’t express myself well but during the course I got better and every day I am learning more and more.”

“This course is a very good course because the teacher is very good. She allows me time to understand everything and helps me when I need it.”

“I feel good about having done this course and next year I want to go to the next level and continue to improve my English.”

ESOL Entry Level 1

“I like to learn English, use the bus, childcare. Tutors are very good.”

“I like the English class in women’s centre. It can help me to improve my English.”

“I like my Teacher, she is very patient. I can now make an appointment.”

ESOL Entry Level 2

“I like the course. I like the teachers, they explain well. When I came here, I don’t know any English, now I speaking, listening, reading, writing.”

“I like to practice speaking in a group, to make a conversation and have a discussion.”

“The strength of this course is that I can write, read, listen, understand and speak better English.”

ESOL Entry Level 3

“A lot of new words, excellent grammar, building sentences. English needed for talking, reading and writing.”

“This course is helping me find a job, to communicate, learn spelling and meet others.”

“I like that there is a certificate and qualification at the end.”

Improving Your English Skills

“I enjoyed the class a lot, good atmosphere and our teacher Michael is an amazing man, very calm and kind as always.”

“The strength of the course is a friendly tutor and good delivery of the lessons.”

Information Technology

IT CLASSES APRIL 2021 - MARCH 2022

As a result of Covid and the impact of social distancing it was decided to retain all IT classes online. This was a decision that enabled both Lifeskills and Wellbeing programmes to utilise more space at the Centre. FSWC did run the Python Computer Programming course in-house.

April 2021 – June 2021

Course	No of Participants	Average Attendance
Microsoft Teams	4	100%
Canva	11	90%
Microsoft Excel Foundation	9	92%
PowerPoint	5	100%
Zoom	6	100%
Shopping Online	5	100%
Microsoft Excel Intermediate	11	100%
Microsoft Word	9	95%

September 2021 – December 2021

Course	No of Participants	Average Attendance
Sage Payroll Level 1	7	100%
Sage Accounts Level 1	6	100%
Computer Programming using Python	3	100%
Microsoft Excel Foundation	9	100%
Canva	5	56%
Microsoft Word	5	80%
Social Media	3	100%

January 2022 – March 2022

Course	No of Participants	Average Attendance
Sage Payroll Level 1	8	96%
Sage Accounts Level 1	6	85%
Microsoft Excel Intermediate	9	94%
Canva	5	95%

Total number of courses	19
Average Attendance	94%
Total number of participants	126

IT Testimonials

CANVA

“Very relaxed and informative and being able to do from home.”

SAGE ACCOUNTS

*“Very comfortable, always great support from the Tutor
Thank you so much for letting me attend. Great course.”*

SAGE PAYROLL

*“Stephanie (Tutor) was excellent and very helpful
Tutor was supportive and very flexible and always there when I needed her.”*

MICROSOFT TEAMS

*“Thoroughly enjoyed this course - Friendly and all well explained,
I really liked how Patricia the Tutor guided us through all the aspects
of MS Teams in a practical way.”*

“Thank you for giving me the opportunity to do courses online and learn so much.”

MICROSOFT WORD

“Tutor explained and taught us a lot and had a lot of patience.”

“Carry on the great work - everyone was great.”

SOCIAL MEDIA

*“Keep up the great work and thank you so much for giving me the
opportunity to learn new things.”*

*“Tutor excellent - she listened to what knowledge the group
wanted to gain from this course.”*

MS EXCEL FOUNDATION

*“The course was excellent, very informative and interesting -
I never knew you could do so much with Microsoft Excel. A big thank you to
Patricia (Tutor) who has been excellent throughout the course, I found it
easy to follow along with her explanations and have learned a lot.”*

MS EXCEL INTERMEDIATE

*“Patricia (Tutor) was amazing an impressive knowledge and answering
all our questions was no problem to her. I have learnt so much and
have already started to use and practice what I was taught.”*

COMPUTER PROGRAMMING USING PYTHON

*“A very interesting course - really enjoyed it and learnt a lot.
Stephanie the Tutor was excellent.”*

Health & Wellbeing

Twenty four courses ran in this period which is a significant increase from the previous year of 15. Five of these courses were part of the CLEAR programme, a project funded through the Public Health Agency and 1 was funded through Women's Resource Development Agency.

The above facts are a very positive sign for FSWC. There has been a huge demand for some classes - which underlines that more people are experiencing mental and physical health challenges. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this is the after effects of Covid-19 and Lockdown. More people are now seeking out help when experiencing poor mental health. Covid has been instrumental in bringing discussions around mental health to the fore.

On a positive note it means more women are now seeking out help when experiencing poor mental health.

COURSES:

- 1 Tai Chi & Relaxation course
- 1 Holistic Self Care course
- 2 Assertiveness courses
- 1 Building Self Confidence course
- 1 Yoga course
- 1 Relax & Unwind course
- 1 Food for Thought course
- 2 Mindfulness courses
- 1 Pilates course
- 1 Living Life to the Full course
- 1 Empty Nest, What Next? course
- 1 Energy Booster course
- 1 Boundaries course
- 1 Breast, Bowel, Cervical Cancer Awareness course
- 1 Vision Board course
- 1 Hormone Harmony course
- 1 Holistic Therapies Tasters course
- 1 Dancing Your Way to Health & Happiness course
- 1 Retirement What Next? session
- 1 Creative Writing course
- 1 Stretch & Tone course
- 1 Transform Your Trolley course

Year	Number of Courses	Retention	Average No per course
2022	24	83%	10
2021	15	72%	8
2020	29	80%	13
2019	23	92%	13
2018	32	85%	12

STATISTICS

Places accepted: 243 (where person attended at least 1 class)

2021 - 127

2020 - 383

Average attendance per course: 7

2021 - 6

2020 - 10

2019 - 10

Reasons for Leaving Course Early

- 1 technical difficulties
- 7 the course was not for them
- 9 unknown
- 7 mental health challenges
- 2 work pattern change
- 12 personal circumstance change
- 2 ill health
- 1 didn't want to continue on Zoom
- 1 gained employment

Reasons for not Accepting a Place

When the Centre opened between September and December many did not attend due to self-isolating or staying at home to protect themselves and/or loved ones.

From January onwards, many declined a place due to home schooling, lack of ICT skills, wanting something in person not online, a decline in mental health, poor broadband.

Health & Wellbeing Testimonials

HOLISTIC SELF CARE

"I have an increased sense of gratitude. Motivated to take time to do practices that help me to feel good, feel I have gained valuable tools and techniques to help with life's challenges."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Learnt a lot of things I didn't know. Have different thinking now and more knowledge."

TAI CHI

"My first Tai Chi session and I really enjoyed it, excellent tutor and I hope to practice Tai Chi a few times a week as it definitely helps you to relax."

BUILDING SELF CONFIDENCE

"This course helped me to set boundaries and to say no to people."

*"Again, more of these courses on a regular basis.
For me, it is vital for my mental health."*

STRETCH & TONE

"Really helping with back problems, confidence, communication. Great teacher."

"I found the course, tutor and venue excellent. Very welcoming, friendly."

CREATIVE WRITING

"Great course really helped me concentrate on me for a change. An hour a week me time to support my wellbeing."

RELAX & UNWIND

"I have thoroughly enjoyed the course! It has helped me get out of the house more - I feel more confident, many thanks x."

"I enjoyed the course and would encourage my friends to join up as well."

WHEN CLASSES WERE ONLINE APRIL – JUNE 2021:

"I still miss the face to face side of it and the pleasure and buzz I get from actually going into first steps and more importantly I miss the social aspect. I know this situation that we find ourselves in is beyond anyone's control and I'm sure that all will be back to as ('normal') as it can be in September."

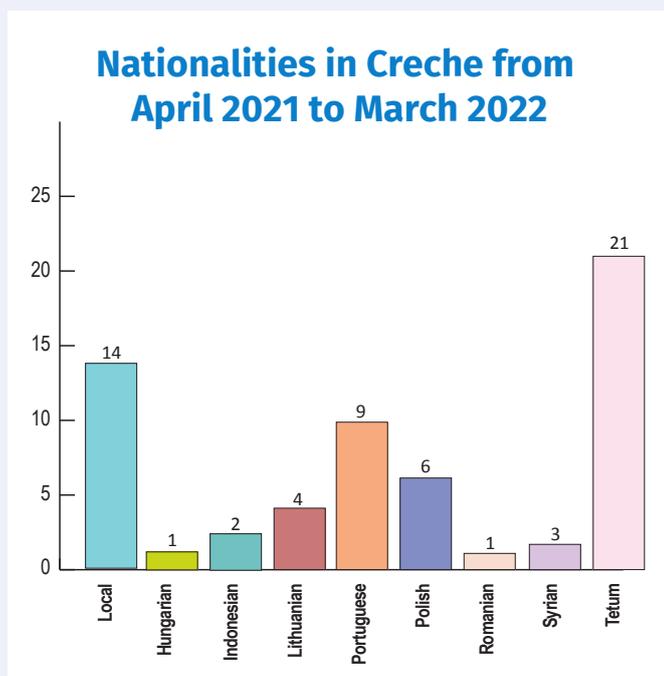
Childcare

This year has been a little different for all of us due to the Pandemic. Our Centre was closed after the Christmas holidays and staff returned on July 19th 2021. Childcare staff were working from home during this time.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, staff were unable to hold our usual settling in days. The courses and crèche started on the 6th September.

**Overall, we had 69 enrolments.
The Total Places allocated for March 2021
to March 2022 was 61 children.**

This year staff have seen **8 Migrant** nationalities plus local children (both British & Irish). The table below highlights the numbers throughout the year.

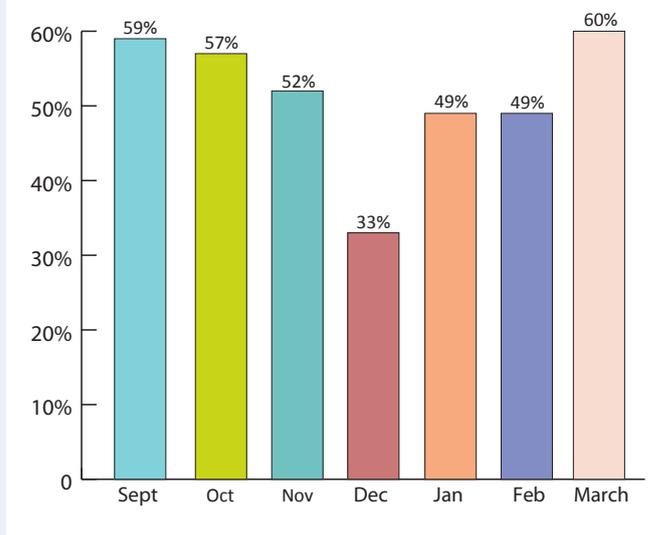


Attendance

During lockdown staff have had to come up with new ways to reach out to our parents/children. Staff kept in contact with our parents/children in a number of ways, including phone calls, texts, emails, weekly live Zoom sessions, garden gate visits (calling to play with children at their door, in their garden), Facebook private group, and videos.

In June we invited our parents out to Dungannon Park where they participated with their child/ren in various activities such as music and movement, and treasure hunts. This event was quite successful and the feedback from both parents and children was very positive.

Attendance from September 2021 to March 2022



Attendance, Social Isolation and Hygiene Pods

Attendance was, as expected, a lot lower than in non Covid years. The threat of the Pandemic, the Lockdown impact, the isolation of those who were infected all made this year very tough to be anything but normal. Our lowest attendance figures were in December 2021 with only 33% of those registered attending. Covid and even the fear of Covid was the primary reason.

However staff had to ensure the health & safety of the Creche for all who did attend. The staff achieved this through an intense cleansing programming ensuring that all toys, equipment and facilities were cleaned down after each session. Children also received their own box to keep their possessions in.



Childcare Testimonials

“Thank you for all activities via zoom and events in the park.”

“All people in the creche very friendly and good.”

“Staff are very friendly and bright and always smile.”

“The staff show photos of other cultures including Timorese which greatly enriched the multi culture in First Steps.”

“The facilities are very clean and sterilised.”

“According to my thoughts childcare bulletin or newsletter is very interesting.”

Reggio Emilia Programme

At FSWC staff continue to use the Reggio Emilia approach to learning. The Reggio Emilia approach to early years education puts children in the driver's seat and views them as curious individuals with the power and potential to develop and learn from their environment and the relationships they build with others.

The Reggio Emilia Approach is innovative and inspiring to early childhood education which values the child as *strong, capable and resilient*; rich with wonder and knowledge. FSWC staff use “provocations” which simply mean to provoke thought, discussions, questions, interests, creativity and ideas. Provocations can also expand on a thought, project, idea and interest.

Topics staff used with the children this year are based around the children's ages/and stages of development as well as their interests and capabilities. Topics included ‘All about Me’, ‘Let's Recycle’, ‘Maths is Fun’, ‘Our Five Senses and ‘Music and Movement including yoga’. One member of staff completed a Level 2 course in Mindfulness in

Children and Young People and has brought back ideas to colleagues on how to deal with childhood anxieties. One of the ways staff can do this is through yoga.

FSWC continue to use ‘The Rhyme challenge’ and this is proving to be quite popular and a useful learning tool. All parents are happy with the challenge and continue to teach their children rhymes at home with a new rhyme each month. Rhymes this year included ‘Little Peter Rabbit had a fly upon his nose’, ‘Tommy Thumb’, and ‘Incy Wincy Spider’.

‘Group Time’ is still incorporated into our daily routine, and is seen to be the most important time of the day. At the beginning of every session (and through our Zoom sessions) each child is welcomed through song. Makaton signs are used at this point where appropriate, the staff and children love to learn easy Makaton signs. Children are taught the days of the week, counting and now we have included the ‘Baby Shark’ song. This particular song gets children and staff up and moving.

Childcare

Staff Training Record

It is important that staff continue to learn and develop their own skills and to keep up to date with essential training. During Lockdown staff were able to complete courses virtually. However, towards the end of the term staff were able to do a few face-to-face courses which was nice to get back into the routine.

There were a number of relevant courses available from many reliable sources. The main site used was the Southern Childcare Partnership.

The training that staff have undertaken this year include:

- Paediatric First Aid x 2 members
- Food & Safety Level 2
- Autism Awareness
- Autism and Anxiety Course
- Autism and Sensory Processing Course
- Solihull Approach in Early Years
- Level 2 Compassionate Leadership Course
- Supporting Children with Special Needs
- Level 2 Mindfulness in Children and Young People
- Forest School Training
- Help Children cope with big emotions
- Understanding and Supporting the Wellbeing and Behaviours of our Youngest Children

Parent Evaluations

Staff are always interested in the opinions and suggestions of our parents/carers. Evaluations help staff to maintain the professional service they provide. Staff conducted one-to-one meetings with parents once a year and also carry out parent evaluations twice a year, one in November and one in March. Staff decided to do an online parent questionnaire in June highlighting our event in the park, we got a low response but were happy for the feedback. Staff learnt through the questionnaire that parents found the zoom sessions, the regular phone calls and the trip to the park the most successful part of our lockdown experience. Parents also commented on the garden gate visits stating that they were an excellent way of communication.

In reference to the event in the park some parents stated they enjoyed the songs and finding gifts as children participated in a treasure hunt.

Staff conducted a parent evaluation in November 2021. There were 26 evaluations distributed and 24 were returned. The results were excellent with positive feedback.



Allotment Project



Information Officer

Website Visits



Facebook Likes

From April 2021 to March 2022
2398 2580 (+182) = (an average increase of 15 likes per month)



Website Visits

Average monthly visit over the 12 month period -814 (last year's figure - 631)



Twitter

April 1st 2021 - March 31st 2022

Tweets	93
Profile views	1,988
Impressions	21,956
Mentions	83
New followers	7



Instagram

FSWC joined Instagram in Feb 2019

New Posts	96
New Followers	61
Following	16

Centre Promotion

As a result of lockdown and social distancing all promotional work - i.e. leaflet distribution and promotional work in Shopping Centres & local Supermarkets - was suspended.

We had to use alternative advertising. A mass distribution of leaflets begun at the end of July 2021. This covered Cookstown and Armagh whilst staff and volunteers completed a delivery in the Dungannon area. There were over 9,000 leaflets distributed. We also delivered posters to local supermarkets, restaurants/cafes, library, etc as they were beginning to open again.



We welcomed the ESOL and Wellbeing classes back to FSWC from Monday 6th September 2021. However all IT classes remained online.

Our AGM meeting was held on Wednesday 3rd November 2021 via Zoom - 20 people attended.

Unfortunately, our annual Quiz night in Dungannon Rugby Club on Thursday 24th February 2022 had to be cancelled due to heavy snow!

We also took this opportunity to avail of a two-week Translink Bus advertising offer. We also designed a banner, had a few printed and placed in strategic areas and the same banner was advertised on the buses and the front page of the Tyrone Courier during the same 2 weeks (last week of July and first week in August).



Welcoming Visitors and Getting Out and About Again



It was great to be able to welcome visitors back to the Centre.

The PSNI gave a talk to our BME ladies on Monday 7th February 2022.

A video from the visit was made from the photos and posted on social media.

Tilly from Surestart called in on Tuesday 8th February 2022 and provided some valuable information to our BME ladies.

It was great to get out and about again!

The Crafty Young Things enjoyed a bus trip to Hillsborough Castle on Friday 25th February 2022.

Again, a video from the fabulous photographs was posted on Social Media.

Our final trip out was to Queens University with our Improve Your English and ESOL ladies. Professor Tess McGuinness gave us a warm welcome while Dr Stephen Flanders joined us via Zoom. Stephen gave a brief insight into his History class showing the ladies how his Zoom class is delivered. We had a short introduction into the murder mystery of Hawley Harvey Crippen – very interesting indeed!

Then the fabulous Life Coach Dr Federica Ferrieri gave an encouraging talk on how our ladies can continue their education at university using the **APROCESS** coaching model.



- A** Aim
- P** Positive
- R** Resources
- O** Ownership
- C** Consequences
- E** Evidence
- S** Steps and
- S** Start - very inspiring!

Benefit Checker

Despite the Lockdown and isolation with Covid and social distancing our Benefit Checker helped identify £80.7k in additional benefits (see table below which highlights the average weekly additional benefit and also the amount in back dated payments).

The Benefit Checker service remained busy and was in high demand throughout the year. There were 64 New Clients and a total of 288 for the year. It was also noted that the level of queries was more varied than previous years. Our own evidence suggests that this is primarily down to the impact of Covid and Lockdown.

Table 1 – Summary of Clients and Work

	01/04/2021 to 31/03/2022
New Clients	64
Cancelled	17
No of forms/letters completed	203
Amount of successful entitlement (weekly)	£1,283.67 X 52 (£66.75k)
Amount of back dated/one off benefits payments for the year	£13.95K
Returning Clients	224
Time spent on telephone queries (hours)	102
Time Spent on 1 to 1 Interviews (hours)	210
Telephone Calls with Clients	207

Referred by	Number
FSWC	14
Women's Aid	2
Friend/Relative	43
Recruitment Agency	2
Vibe Armagh	3

Age Group	Number
18 - 25	8
25 - 40	28
41 - 60	16
61+	12

Background of New Clients

Sex	No	Portugese	Polish	Romanian	Bulgarian	Tetum	NI/UK	Lithuanian	Belarus	Brazil	Hungary
Female	55	12	2	1	3	4	25	4	1	2	1
Male	9	2	1			3	3				

Types of Queries

1. Universal Credit
2. PIP Applications and Appeals
3. Marriage Breakdown
4. College Registrations
5. Employment & Support Allowance
6. Pensions
7. Funeral Grants
8. Capability For Work Form
9. HMRC
10. Attendance Allowance
11. Job Applications
12. Mental Health
13. Domestic Abuse
14. Maternity
15. Job & Benefits
16. EU Settlement Scheme
17. National Insurance

Problems and Issues

1. Loneliness
2. Mental Health
3. Scared - Shielding
4. Frustration
5. Domestic Abuse
6. Cannot get in contact with their GP
7. Public Transport - Isolation
8. Government Agencies - unhelpful/do not know themselves
9. Don't know who to contact if they have a query

Benefit Checker Testimonials

“Gillian is a very good listener.”

“I have missed FSWC during Covid.”

“Gillian is very approachable and empathic to my situation.”

*“Gillian is very easy to talk too about personal things.
What is discussed in her office stays in her office.”*

*“FSWC has given me so much support, with classes,
my mental health and financial advice.”*

“FSWC has made me feel very welcome, especially Gillian, I like the sweets.”

*“I find Gillian very easy to talk to. She has a very sensible approach,
and always gives me options. I find this very reassuring and
calming, as I would get very anxious.”*

*“I can telephone, e-mail or call and there is always a happy
and reassuring voice with both Gillian and Ingrid,
they always say hello and have time for a chat.”*

Community Relations Programmes

Despite starting the financial year in lockdown, FSWC returned to a normality (albeit with Social Distancing measures) in September 2021.

FSWC was awarded funding through The Executive Office under it's "Minority Ethnic Development Fund" (MEDF) and also under the "Central Good Relations Fund".

Part of the CR Programme involved ESOL i.e. English for Speakers of Other Languages and also two Beginner or Pre-ESOL programmes.

You can read about these in pages 6-9.

Why Community Relations?

First Steps Women's Centre is a haven for women from many different backgrounds and nationalities. One of the realities of migration to the Mid Ulster area is the increase in BME (Black, Minority, Ethnic) families settling in the area. Over the past 16-17 years many BME women have attended ESOL courses at FSWC. These women are part of the community. They identify with living in the area and as such are now a vital part of the community.

FSWC developed LUCED - Learning, Understanding, Celebrating and Enjoying Diversity. This programme explored many different aspects of life including:

- Cuisine
- History
- Weather
- Religion
- Politics
- Language

Diversity is the spice of life. FSWC has had 19 different nationalities registered on its programmes during the past 17 years.

The women continue to attend the Centre and they continue to endorse the services and programmes that FSWC provides.

FSWC felt that it was incumbent to facilitate and explore the many different cultures that are a daily part of FSWC.

Community Relations Programmes at First Steps Women's Centre 2021-22

CR Programmes	Dates	No.s	No. of Nationalities
LUCED - Cultural Awareness Course	Oct-Dec 2021 & Jan-March 2022	15	5
Flavours of the World - Cuisine	Jan-Feb 2022 March 2022	16	5
Photo Voices	Feb-March 2022	8	4
Visit to Queens University	March 2022	14	6
Visit to Atlas Women's Centre	March 2022	7	3
Session with Volunteer Now	February 2022	12	4
Session with PSNI	February 2022	11	4
Session with Women's Aid	March 2022	10	4
Session with Mid Ulster Council	February 2022	8	3
Session with Sure Start Dungannon	February 2022	9	4
Totals		110	

The table above highlights the different programmes that local and BME women were involved in throughout the 6 month period from September to March 2022.

Feedback from all of the programmes was very positive.



Community Relations Testimonials

LOCAL WOMAN

"I enjoyed the LUCED workshops. I gained a better understanding about Portuguese and East Timorese people. I know more about their culture and lives before they came to Northern Ireland."

WOMAN FROM GUINEA BISSEAU

"I loved all the courses. The LUCED (Cultural Awareness) course was difficult because of language (sic). I enjoy the teacher talking about different countries."

COMMENTS ABOUT FLAVOURS OF THE WORLD

"I enjoy to make friends with other nations/country/different people."

"I liked all the course and I am going to cook every day."

"Course was very informative, interesting and allowed participants to interact and gain greater understanding of different cultures."

Photo Voices January - March 2022

The Photo Voices programme was in partnership with Queen's University Belfast. It was an innovative way of looking at and exploring Inclusion and Exclusion. The course enabled women to photograph objects and items that represented something that they felt made them feel included or excluded. It also looked at the growth of different cultures within a small geographical area.

The group discussions covered a lot of material including, history, how things have developed to help the rise of BME communities and also how things haven't changed. The local women gave a perspective from the Troubles.

Some highlighted areas of Dungannon and Mid Ulster that they perceived as "different" and that they still felt excluded from certain areas.



Discussion on Displacement - History of Emigration Discussion on the different stages of "Your Journey of Emigration"

- Stage 1** - Roof over your head.
- Stage 2** - Food - discussion on whether food could be seen as another form of inclusion or exclusion. Discussion around some people from East Timorese community making lots of food for other East Timorese families - as a way of reminding people of home. Food - growth of diverse range of shops to provide for the needs and demands of migrant community.
- Stage 3** - Taking photos of what makes you feel at home.
- Stage 4** - Ideas around education, education of their children - a sense of where they felt welcomed and belonged and where they felt unwelcomed.

Crafty Young Things

After not being able to meet in person for 18 months we were delighted to welcome back the ladies from Crafty Young Things on Friday 5th November 2021. They were so pleased to be back and it was great to have them with us. Each Friday we can have 10 to 15 ladies with us.

During the year, with some funding we had secured, we were able to arrange a few activities for them and help them make the transition back to normality, or nearer normality than we had been, as the ladies found COVID a very stressful time having to shield and isolate.

Some of the activities included Christmas Craft, Christmas Wreath Making, Spring Flower arrangement in a basket with the help of Sinead Goodwin and the highlight was a trip to Hillsborough Castle and Gardens, followed by lunch which was enjoyed by everyone.

The group had a trip to Saint George's Market at Christmas and in February they had Lunch in Dungannon Golf Club.

A new venture was an inhouse cooking class for them on two Fridays. The first week they cooked with an



Italian flavour with the help of Marion and the next week the food was from East Timor were Maria, a member of the group, did all the cooking with the help of group members Oliva and Sonia. The ladies of the group were able to get involved also with the prepping and serving all the dishes.

When there are no pre-arranged activities the ladies are happy to come into the Centre and bring their knitting or crocheting, although not much knitting or crocheting is done as they love the chat with each other and the lunch which one of them provides each week!

“Life is hard at times, but this class is great. Enjoy meeting new friends and learning skills. The staff are first class, helpful and friendly. It is good to get out of the house.”

“I enjoy coming to Crafty Young Thing class due to it lifting my mood. It is a sociable outlet and it gives me a hobby that I enjoy. It lets me meet different people and enjoy their company like one big family.”

“I very much like crocheting and craft classes and then I joined Crafty Young Things class each Friday.”

Day Trip to Hillsborough Castle

“I really, really loved my trip to the Castle, as I love learning new things and hearing about the history of the place I now live in. I like take photos of the castle and gardens and sending them to my family in East Timor. The castle inside was a beautiful place. The ladies have made me feel very welcome and they also help me with my English. Crafty Young Things is a fabulous class, we have lots of fun.”

Staff Training Completed

- Diploma in Community Development Practice
- Microsoft Teams
- Introducing Woodwork in Early Childhood Education
- Zoom Training
- LEAD Programme
- Understanding the Impact of Domestic Abuse
- Big Gift Fundraising
- Safeguarding Children Training
- Canva
- Paediatric First Aid
- Health & Safety
- Hanen Teacher Talk Programme
- Emotional Well being for children with Learning difficulties
- OCN Level 2 ADHD in the classroom
- Full Safeguarding Children Course
- Health & Safety, Risk Assessment & Manual Handling for Childcare Settings
- Sensory Play/Messy Play
- Covid 19 Infection Control
- First Aid Requalification Certificate
- Covid 19 infection prevention and control training resources for childcare settings
- Level 2 Meeting the Needs of Learners with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in the Mainstream Classroom
- Safeguarding
- First @ Work
- Cyber Security - Ransomware the other side of reponse
- Financial Capability and economic abuse
- First Aid at Work (Level 1)
- Emergency First Aid at Work & Defibrillator
- Food Safety Level 1
- Canva Create Conference
- Support Language Development
- Online Marketing - What Charities Can Learn and Do
- Online donations and fundraising: financial best practice session'
- Microsoft Excel Foundaton
- Microsoft Excel Intermediate
- Introduction to handling conflict in groups
- ILM approved Compassionate leadership course
- Supporting children with special needs
- Helping Children to cope with big emotions
- IAB Level 1 Award in Computerised Payroll
- Understanding and supporting the wellbeing and behaviours of our youngest children
- Boosting Language and Literacy learning
- Discrimination and equal opportunity (Northern Ireland)
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Information security management

An Example of a Course Evaluation Form - These are completed for all courses

FIRST STEPS WOMEN'S CENTRE - COURSE EVALUATION REPORT

REPORT FOR

THE ATTENTION OF: Michael McGoldrick, Yvonne Corbett
 ADDRESS: 21a William Street, Dungannon, Co. Tyrone BT70 1DX
 COURSE TITLE: Flavours of the World
 VENUE: First Steps Women's Centre
 DATES: 14.1.2022 - 11.2.2022
 TUTORS:

Evaluation Proformas were completed at the close of the session.
 Number of Participants who completed the Evaluation Form = 7

Question

1. How did you hear about this course?

Social Media	Leaflet	Other
2	1	4

Other: In the Centre

2. Did you know about the Women's Centre before enrolling on this course?

Yes	No
7	0

3. Did you enjoy the Flavours of the World sessions?

Yes, All of it	Yes, Some of it	No, Not at all
7	-	-

A What did you enjoy the most –

- Learning about different cuisines and interacting with different nationalities very interesting and informative
- All the new food dishes
- I enjoy all the things and the teacher learning very well, Learning different foods and meals
- All good, everything excellent
- Meeting others and tasting other foods
- Food, cooking meeting people
- Meet people, sharing experience, food and cooking

B What did you least enjoy –

- Cooking by myself
- Nothing x 2
- I enjoyed everything but my difficulty in speaking English
- Course could have been longer to allow subject expansion

4. Did the session change any of your ideas about cooking and meal planning? If yes how?

Now more informed More fluent in other cultural aspects of cooking Trying different ingredients together

5. The participants were asked to give a rating in answer to each question with 1 = very poor up to 6 = very good for each questions. Answers were as follows:

QUESTION	NO. OF RESPONSES BY PARTICIPANTS UNDER EACH RATING CATEGORY					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>How would you rate:</i>						
The Course overall?	0	0	0	0	0	7
The flexibility of the tutor?	0	0	0	0	0	7
The tutor's skill and knowledge?	0	0	0	0	0	7

6. Would you recommend this course or the centre to a friend or family member?

Yes	No
7	0

Any other comments:

- *I appreciated this course a lot, to meet different people, and enjoyed eating and talking*
- *I enjoy to make friends with other nations/country/different people and enjoy food and chat*
- *Very enjoyable and constructive*
- *Keep up the good work*
- *I liked all the course and I am going to cook every day*
- *Course was very informative, interesting and allowed participants to interact and gain greater understanding of different cultures etc*

Testimonial Questions

1. How did you feel about learning English before you started First Steps Women Centre?

Before I made the decision to learn I wasn't sure but I wanted to have a better standard of English to look for a job. I was excited to learn. I love English and learning a new language. When I first came to Northern Ireland I was afraid meeting people but now I can speak some English I am not so afraid. When I first went shopping I didn't know what the shop assistant was saying to me and I couldn't reply to her. The first few days learning English at the centre I was nervous but I got better and better.

2. How did you feel during the programme?

I loved the programme. I learnt a lot and my teacher was great I met other girls and had conversations with people from other countries and they really helped me to improve my English. I am currently learning Speaking & Listening Reading and Writing. I enjoyed coming to class twice a week and I felt comfortable with the teacher and centre staff.

3. Do you like the Women's Centre? Do you have childcare or use transport?

I have both childcare and transport support. My daughter is very happy with the creche. The Women's Centre is a good place for those who want to learn and it not expensive like the College. The bus driver is a very friendly man.

4. What are the strengths of the course. Is it a good Course? Is the tutor a good teacher?

The course is a very good course. The teacher is understanding, patient and wonderful. I am happy to be here. I feel like I am learning something new every day. The course is really good for beginners but there are all levels. I like talking to others in pairs and doing the class worksheets.

5. What have you learnt here?

I have learnt Speaking & Listening, Reading and Writing. I have learnt new words, spelling and grammar. I have learnt new English skills and got confidence to speak English. We learnt plurals, singular, simple present, simple past, verbs etc

6. Did you make new friends? Where they from other countries?

I have made many new friends especially two lovely girls, one is from Poland and the other is Lithuanian. I have other friends from East Timor and Indonesia, and Portugal.

7. How do you feel about the end of the Course? What will you do next year?

Next year I want to continue with the programme and learn more English. I am very glad I decided to come to the Centre. I hope to pass my exam this year and start a higher level in September. In the Summer holidays I will miss everybody as they are like a family to me.

Annual Accounts 2021-2022

Statement of Financial Position (balance sheet)

as at 31 March 2022

	Note	2022 £	2021 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	13	379,101	407,118
Total Fixed Assets		379,101	407,118
Current assets			
Debtors	14	46,285	29,009
Cash at bank and in hand		344,347	287,649
Total Current Assets		390,632	316,658
Liabilities			
Creditors falling due within one year	15	3,453	4,276
Net Current assets		387,179	312,382
Net assets		766,280	719,500
The funds of the charity:			
Unrestricted income funds	16	180,290	132,781
Designated Reserves	16	150,000	100,000
Restricted income funds	17	435,990	486,719
Total charity funds		766,280	719,500

Annual Accounts 2021-2022

2 Income from charitable activities

Income from charitable activities	Restricted Funds 2022	Restricted Funds 2021
	£	£
European Social Fund / Department for Economy	272,716	275,297
PBNI	-	720
BBC Children in Need	-	5,000
The Hickinbotham Charitable Trust	-	1,000
Enkalon Foundation	-	500
Garfield Weston Foundation	30,000	25,000
The Clothworkers Foundation	-	601
Mid Ulster District Council -Strategic Community Development Grant	6,000	5,000
Mid Ulster District Council - Community Development	2,500	1,526
CIF - Match Funding: Department for Communities	35,642	32,375
Department for Communities - WCCF	38,242	36,464
CIF - Non-Match Funding Department for Communities	26,888	24,423
Dfc - Prep for Work	2,803	2,829
Small amount written off	-	79
The Pathway Fund	15,000	15,000
Co-operation Ireland Small Capital Grants	1,398	1,724
Dungannon Credit Union	-	400
Crowd Funder	-	609
Martin Lewis Covid 19 Fund	-	7,500
The Volant Charitable Trust	17,300	-
TESCO (Ground Works)	1,000	-
Clear/HSC	4,226	4,680
Awards for All	-	10,000
The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust	3,000	3,000
Ecclesiastical - Movement for Good	1,000	-
Arnold Clark Community Fund	1,000	-
Charities Aid Foundation (CAF)	2,000	-
Mid Ulster District Council - Business Marketing Grant	300	-
AMAZON SMILE/Royalties	1	54
Cash for Kids	-	980
TEO (MEDF)	26,331	-
TEO (GR)	17,435	-
Halifax Foundation For NI	-	8,500
CFNI - Sir George Earle Benevolent Fund	1,600	-
CFNI - Wesleyan Assurance Fund	9,940	-
LBS	-	1,000
Department of Health	-	3,799
BOI - CFNI/ PY CFNI Tampon TAX	-	4,397
TOTAL	516,321	472,300

Annual Accounts 2021-2022

Analysis of expenditure on charitable activities

	Total	2022	2021
	£	£	£
Wages and salaries	263,961	263,961	256,084
Staff training and recruitment	942	942	4,338
Staff T&S /Expenses	3,448	3,448	88
Course Expenses and tutor fees	47,940	47,940	33,907
Exam Fees	3,863	3,863	6,881
Volunteer Expenses	843	843	590
Participant comfort expenses	459	459	29
Participant Training & Course Materials	2,579	2,579	969
Facilitation & Events	472	472	4,614
Rent and Rates	16,099	16,099	-
Insurance	3,064	3,064	3,892
Light and heat	5,725	5,725	5,664
Repairs and maintenance	6,553	6,553	5,069
Small Equipment Purchase	2,250	2,250	1,719
IT support	3,099	3,099	2,718
Printing, postage and stationery	3,247	3,247	1,840
Advertising	4,204	4,204	1,853
Telephone	2,961	2,961	3,059
Creche Equipment	2,103	2,103	1,824
Motor expenses	1,637	1,637	1,606
Participant Travel	1,998	1,998	447
Interpreting Costs	-	-	74
Subscriptions	540	540	346
Accreditation Fees Application	740	740	500
Health and Safety	81	81	-
Emergency Assistance	2,551	2,551	4,690
General expenses	198	198	-
Donations to other Charities	50	50	1,800
Misc Expenses	- 46	- 46	155
Depreciation of tangible assets	35,584	35,584	38,821
Refunds	- 72	- 72	
Governance costs (see note 10)	2,520	2,520	2,400
Support costs (see note 10)	61,277	61,277	55,455
Total	480,869	480,869	441,431

Funders 2021-2022



The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
Registered Charity No. 200198



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