



first steps

Women's Centre

Support. Educate. Empower.



Annual Report 2024-25





Michael McGoldrick
Chief Executive Officer



Marion Murphy
Finance Manager



Carmel Creaney
Training & Education
Coordinator



Amanda Boyd
Training & Education
Coordinator



Theresa Boyle
Finance Assistant



Franco Donnelly
Mini Bus Driver



Sonata Slajiene
House Keeper



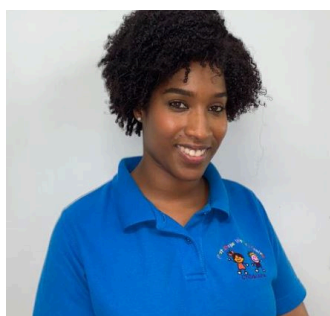
Helen Oudiden
Childcare Leader



Jacqueline Donnelly
Childcare Assistant Leader



Giedre Blair
Childcare Assistant



Francisca Mendes
Childcare Assistant



Samia Mando
Childcare Assistant



Tara Gilkinson
Admin Support



Olivia Turley
REAP Co-Ordinator

Contents

• Chairperson's Report	03
• CEO Report	05
• Childcare Report	07
• Cultural Programme	11
• Wellbeing Report	13
• Testimonials	15
• Life Skills Report	17
• Transport Report	22
• Rural Economic Accelerator Programme	23
• Testimonials	28
• Accounts Report	29
• Funders	33

Chairperson's Report

It is with deep pride and gratitude that I present this year's Chairperson's Report for First Steps Women's Centre (FSWC). Over the past twelve months, FSWC has continued to deliver transformational services that empower, educate and equip women from all walks of life to lead more confident, connected, and purposeful lives. As Chair, I have had the privilege to witness first-hand the impact of this work—not only through statistics and reports but in the voices, stories, and progress of the women themselves.

A Year of Growth, Inclusion, and Impact

This year has marked a period of continued growth across all areas of our provision. Whether through our childcare services, which welcomed children from 13 nationalities, or through our extensive Wellbeing, Employability, Cultural Awareness and Life Skills programmes, FSWC has remained steadfast in its mission: to provide a safe, inclusive and empowering space for women.

The REAP employability programme continues to break down systemic barriers, with 147 women joining in its second year and over 20% progressing into employment. The breadth of course provision—ranging from First Aid to Leadership & Management—has been matched by a personalised approach, including 1-1 support and life coaching. These outcomes are more than numbers; they are lives changed and futures reclaimed.

In Wellbeing, the Centre delivered an impressive 33 courses to 245 women, 163 of whom were new to the Centre. These initiatives have proven to be life-affirming for many, with the average Warwick Scale improvement remaining at 6 points—demonstrating meaningful positive change in participants' mental wellbeing. Events such as the Talent and Wellbeing Fair not only showcased women's entrepreneurial aspirations but also strengthened our sense of community and connection.

Our Life Skills programmes—particularly the ESOL and Literacy classes which was in partnership with SW College, continue to thrive in diversity and reach.

With over 185 applicants and 161 qualifications awarded, these courses have been instrumental in equipping women with essential communication skills, fostering integration, and boosting confidence. Pre-ESOL and multilingual support have been critical in helping newly arrived participants take their first steps in education and community engagement.

Our Childcare provision remains at the heart of what we do. With an average attendance rate of 72% and robust bilingual support, our crèche enabled more mothers to access education and development opportunities. The adoption of the Reggio Emilia approach and responsive learning topics nurtured children's curiosity and creativity. We are proud of the safe, stimulating and inclusive environment provided, and we salute our dedicated childcare team.

Celebrating Culture and Diversity

One of this year's most vibrant and engaging developments has been the success of our cultural activities and programmes, generously funded by The Executive Office through its Minority Ethnic Development Fund, and supported by Choice Housing.

These initiatives have been instrumental in fostering cross-cultural understanding and building bridges within our increasingly diverse community. Through cultural awareness sessions and our flagship six-week programme, "Cultures Unveiled", participants explored identity, heritage, and belonging in a safe and creative environment. The project culminated in a stunning photography exhibition, hosted both at FSWC and at Connect, part of the Dungannon Enterprise Centre. The exhibition not only celebrated the rich cultural backgrounds of our women but also highlighted the shared human experiences that unite us all.

These events served as powerful reminders of the importance of inclusion, representation, and storytelling. They reinforced FSWC's commitment to ensuring every woman feels seen, heard, and valued—regardless of background, language, or culture.

Strategic Vision and Future Direction

As we look ahead, FSWC stands at a pivotal moment of opportunity. With stability re-established after funding challenges in 2023, our strategic focus now turns toward sustainable growth, enhanced impact, and innovation in service delivery. The Board, in close collaboration with the Senior Management Team, is committed to:

- Fostering deeper partnerships with educational institutions, funders and community networks.
- Securing long-term funding stability to future-proof vital services.
- Evolving our strategic plan to align with regional economic and social development priorities, including increased support for women entrepreneurs and those with complex needs.

As Chair, I am also keen to explore how FSWC can build further pathways into further education, training and employment, especially through partnership with regional colleges, local employers, and government programmes. We must continue to lead as a model of best practice for women's empowerment in Northern Ireland.

Acknowledgements

The achievements of the past year are a direct result of the dedication and passion of our staff, volunteers, tutors, and the Board. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our Chief Executive and leadership team, whose unwavering commitment ensures that FSWC remains a place of hope, healing and growth.

To our tutors, funders and supporters—thank you for believing in our mission. Your continued investment is changing lives.

And to the women of FSWC: your courage, resilience and spirit are the reason we do what we do. You inspire us daily. Thank you for trusting us to be part of your journey.

Closing Reflection

FSWC is more than a centre—it is a community, a catalyst, and a sanctuary. As we move forward, we do so not only with ambition but with deep purpose. Together, we will continue to ensure that every woman who walks through our doors leaves stronger, more confident, and better equipped to shape her own future.

Thank you.

Nicola Quinn
Chairperson



Chief Executive's Report

It is with immense pride and gratitude that I present this year's CEO Report for First Steps Women's Centre (FSWC). The past twelve months have been a testament to the strength, resilience, and purpose that define who we are as a community.

In a year that continued to demand agility and innovation, FSWC not only survived but flourished, reaching more women than ever before and building strong new partnerships.

The Financial Landscape and Strategic Resilience

FSWC secured funding from a wide range of sources, including The Executive Office, the Department for Communities, the National Lottery Community Fund, Garfield Weston, Choice Housing, and others.

This diverse funding base has provided a level of financial stability that allows us to grow and adapt strategically. First Steps Women's Centre has also developed a strategy to encourage local private sector funding, an area largely untapped by FSWC.

Building Our Voice: A Story of Visibility

One of the most powerful developments this year was the opportunity to elevate FSWC's voice and visibility. With support from Dungannon Enterprise Centre, we were introduced to Lisa McElroy, a PR expert who helped us shape and tell our story. This collaboration culminated in a BBC Northern Ireland feature aired over the Christmas period, highlighting the journeys of migrant women attending English classes at our centre. The segment resonated deeply, showcasing not only their linguistic progression but also the cultural exchange and solidarity being nurtured within our walls.

This national recognition affirmed what we already knew — that FSWC is a beacon of hope, learning, and community integration. Our efforts to promote cultural understanding and connection were further demonstrated through our Cultural Identity and Community Relations Programme, funded by The Executive Office and Choice Housing.

The 6-week "Cultures Unveiled" project, which ended in a moving photography exhibition both at our centre and at "Connect" (Dungannon Enterprise Centre), exemplified how creativity, shared stories, and mutual respect can bridge divides.

Programme Highlights

This year, our childcare programme supported 81 children from 13 different nationalities, a testament to the trust placed in us by a diverse community. Our Life Skills and ESOL courses welcomed over 150 women, with more than 160 qualifications achieved. The REAP Employability Programme continues to grow in strength and impact — helping women overcome barriers to employment and see their true worth.

Our Wellbeing programme, now in its second year of the Lottery-funded VERA's Project, delivered 33 courses and supported over 240 women. The evidence of transformation — both statistical and anecdotal — affirms our belief in the deep healing and empowering effect of our work.

Our counselling service continues to provide critical one-to-one support, and despite the departure of our dedicated counsellor, we are actively seeking funding to ensure this essential service continues without disruption.

This year also brought a number of significant visits which offered us the opportunity to showcase the heart of our work and the depth of our impact.

In May 2024, the Department for Communities Committee, chaired by Colm Gildernew MLA, held a meeting at our Centre — a moment of great pride and visibility for us. We also welcomed Pat Cullen MP, who engaged warmly with our staff and service users.

Minister for the Department for Communities, Gordon Lyons, MLA, visited FSWC in February 2025 alongside local MLAs Deborah Erskine and Keith Buchanan. The Minister was handed a piece of written coursework by a Syrian mother who was studying English at FSWC.

The Minister asked to keep the piece of work. He then met the Syrian woman and greeted her warmly and spoke to her in Arabic. This was a very poignant moment.

These visits served not only to highlight the breadth of our course offerings but also to amplify awareness of the additional support services that are the cornerstone of our wrap-around provision — including free childcare, transport, counselling, hygiene bank and emergency aid. They affirmed the power of our cross-community and cross-ethnic approach and validated the importance of continued investment in the transformative work of FSWC.

Governance

This year also marked a positive step forward in strengthening our governance. FSWC recruited several new directors, bringing fresh perspectives, skills, and lived experience to our Board. Among them is Svitlana Sukar, a Ukrainian cardiac paramedic who brings deep insight into the needs of migrant communities and healthcare systems. We also welcomed Margaret Martin, a retired school principal whose leadership in education and deep commitment to lifelong learning make her a valuable addition to our strategic direction.

These appointments reflect our continued effort to ensure our governance structure is as inclusive, knowledgeable, and representative as the community we serve.

Looking Ahead

Our path forward is one of strategic growth and continued responsiveness. The diversity of our programmes, our unique wrap-around services — including childcare, transport, counselling, and bilingual support — and the strength of our partnerships position us to do more, reach further, and deepen our impact.

We are currently exploring opportunities under PEACEPLUS and the Heritage Lottery Fund, with the hope of broadening our cultural and community outreach even further.

Our priority in the year ahead will be to invest in our people, enhance our visibility, strengthen our volunteer base, and continue delivering high-quality, life-changing programmes to the women we serve.

Final Thanks

To our board, our funders and our incredible staff, volunteers and tutors — thank you for believing in the mission and in the power of women to transform their lives and their communities.

And to the women of First Steps Women's Centre — your courage, your dreams, and your determination continue to inspire all that we do.

With heartfelt thanks,

Michael McGoldrick
Chief Executive Officer



Childcare Report

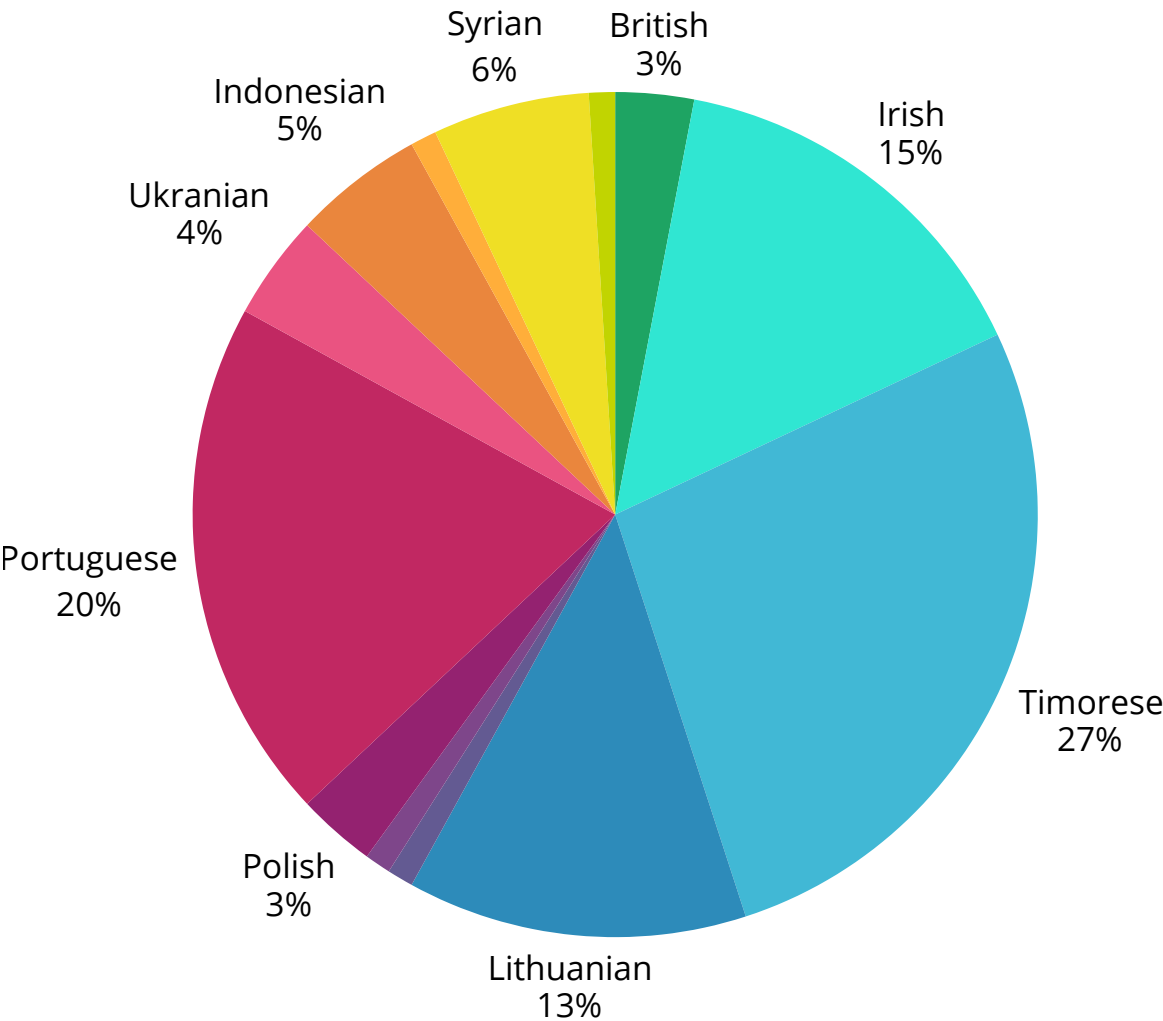
In 2024–25, First Steps Women’s Centre Crèche supported 81 enrolled children, of whom 79 attended regularly. Average attendance across the year was 72%.

- 13 nationalities represented
- Parents overwhelmingly positive in evaluations (26/32 returned)
- Social Services inspection confirmed full compliance with no recommendations

The crèche is vital to enabling women’s participation in training and wellbeing courses. Some mothers attended up to 14 different courses, made possible by access to safe, high-quality childcare.



The chart below shows the Nationalities in Crèche



Learning Approach – Reggio Emilia

Our childcare provision follows the Reggio Emilia approach – child-led, creative and exploratory. Monthly themes included:

- Recycle & Reuse
- Nature & Flower Study
- Our Five Senses
- Animals Big and Small
- The World Around Us

Daily routines balanced free play, group activities, art, music, messy play, outdoor learning, healthy snacks, and story time. This structured yet flexible environment supports holistic development.



Staffing & Training

This year we bid farewell to long-standing crèche leader Helena Oudiden who departed in March 2025. Our dedicated staff team continue to provide professional and nurturing care, supported by ongoing training:

- Paediatric First Aid
- Safeguarding & Refresher Training
- Food Safety, Health & Safety, Manual Handling
- Level 1 Makaton
- Level 3 Autism Spectrum Support (10-week course)
- Designated Safeguarding Officer training



Safeguarding & Quality

The annual Social Services inspection (27th February 2025) focused on the quality of physical environment, monitoring and evaluation. The inspection found full compliance and made no recommendations.

Policies updated in 2024–25 included Admissions & Settling In, CCTV, Safeguarding, Risk Assessment, and Arrival/Departure procedures.

Why Investment Matters

High-quality childcare underpins women's participation in education, training and employment. It ensures children from diverse cultural backgrounds are nurtured, supported and prepared for lifelong learning.

Investment in childcare at FSWC delivers a double impact – empowering women and enabling children to thrive.



Parent Evaluations

32 evaluations were distributed and 26 returned. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with parents emphasising the supportive, welcoming environment and professional staff.

Some of the comments included:



"My child feels so welcome and loved. I like the support he gets and the activities he does."

"Thank you very much for your kindness and generosity."

"My son loves it there so much that sometimes he doesn't want to leave."

"I am very happy to bring my child here and I can learn another language in this facility."



Cultural Programme

Celebrating Diversity, Building Understanding

First Steps Women's Centre (FSWC) continues to shine as a leading light in Mid Ulster, creating opportunities for both local and migrant women to learn, share, and grow together. Over the past financial year, our cultural programme has brought communities closer, strengthened understanding, and celebrated the richness of our diverse backgrounds.

This work has been made possible thanks to the generous support of Radius Housing, Choice Housing, and the Northern Ireland Executive Office, through its Minority Ethnic Development Fund (MEDF).

Programme Highlights and Achievements

Language Learning for Empowerment

We delivered 4 ESOL and 1 Pre-ESOL programmes, supporting 145 women to improve their English.

Every participant reported improved language skills, with a 100% pass rate among the Reading Exams and an overall average pass rate of 82.5% for those who sat accredited exams.

"For the first time, I feel confident to speak to my child's teacher without needing help."

Cultural Awareness from the Inside Out

We hosted 27 workshops led by Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women, sharing traditions, cultures, and lived experiences. These sessions reached both women within FSWC and external organisations, including schools, building mutual respect and understanding.

"I never knew we had so many cultures in our town – I've learned so much just by listening."

Community Events that Connect

Across the year, we held 9 public events, from festive celebrations to International Women's Day, attracting more than 330 people.

Cultures Unveiled

Launched in January 2025 (previously Pictures of My World), this creative photography and storytelling course encouraged women to capture images that expressed what inclusion, exclusion, and culture mean to them.

- One 6-week programme ran with 8 participants (50% BME, 50% local women).
- 87.5% reported greater community cohesion, understanding, and acceptance of different cultures.
- Their work was exhibited during International Women's Day (76 attendees) and at the Dungannon Enterprise Centre, where it was on display for a week, reaching an estimated 165 people in total.
- The course faced challenges: the afternoon schedule limited attendance, and budget constraints meant a second programme couldn't run.

"I see my culture differently now – I am proud to share it."

"Taking photos helped me show feelings I couldn't explain in words."



Human Library Events

Our innovative Human Library model gave people the chance to 'borrow' a human book – a conversation with a woman from a different background – to learn about her story.

Notably, in October 2024, we took the Human Library to the Long Gallery, Stormont, where 15 BME women met with 15 MLAs and senior civil servants. The frank, personal exchanges opened many eyes to the realities of BME women's lives in Mid Ulster.

"They listened to me – really listened – and I think they understood for the first time."

Special Feature: Women in Power

Our Women in Power programme equipped participants with comprehensive knowledge of civic structures at all levels of government. Participants particularly valued the programme's effective balance between theoretical learning and practical application.

The course highlight was a visit to the Northern Ireland Assembly, where participants met with the Community Engagement team and observed a live committee meeting in session.

"I was shocked at how little I knew about our governmental procedures – now I want to be part of it."

"The Stormont visit was fascinating – it made politics real for me."

Women left the programme more confident, more informed, and ready to have their voices heard in civic life.

Making a Difference

Feedback from participants and partners shows the real value of our work:

- 100% of cultural awareness participants reported increased understanding and acceptance of different cultures.
- 95% of event attendees said they had a deeper appreciation of cultural diversity.
- Many local people and migrant women are now volunteering, helping to run events, and actively shaping the life of our community.



Wellbeing Report

Executive Summary

In 2024–25, First Steps Women’s Centre delivered 33 wellbeing courses and workshops, engaging 245 women across Mid-Ulster.

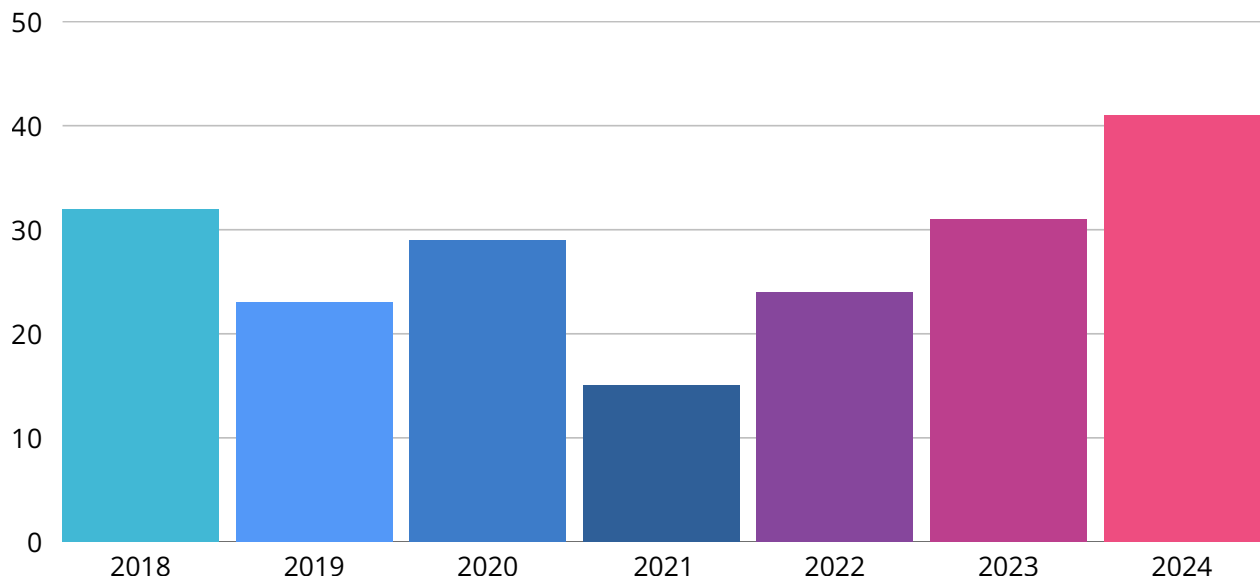
- 163 were new participants
- 454 places accepted across programmes
- 72% retention rate

The Warwick Scale showed an average 6-point improvement.

This improvement is highly significant and should not be underestimated.

Participants reported better mental health, greater confidence, and new friendships. The independent evaluation of the VERAS Project reinforced that engagement reduced stress and anxiety while increasing confidence, positivity, and social connection.

Growth in Wellbeing Courses (2018-2024)



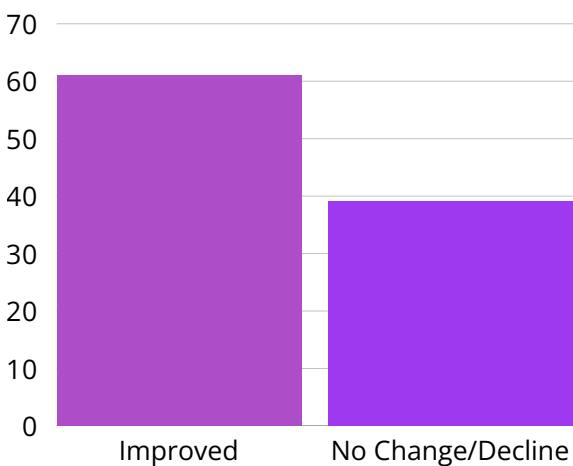
Programme Highlights

Courses included Pilates, Yoga, Drumming, Reflexology Diplomas, and financial wellbeing workshops.

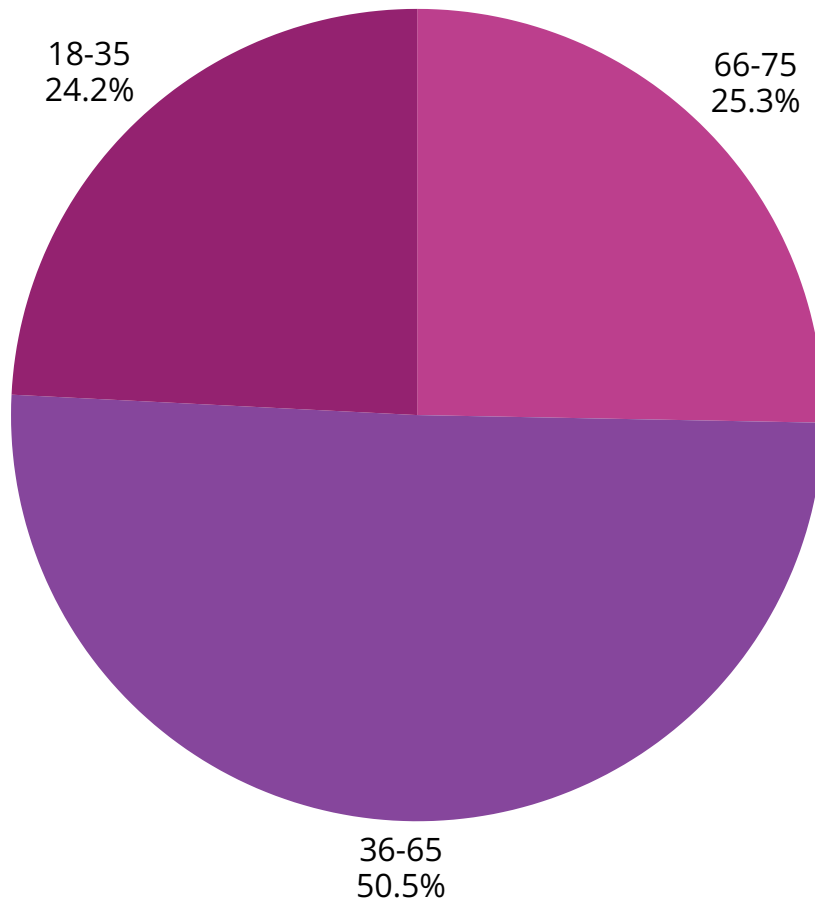
Highlights included:

- 7 of 8 women achieved a Diploma in Reflexology, leading to new businesses and enhanced careers.
- International Women’s Day Talent & Wellbeing Fair welcomed 70+ attendees, with 13 women showcasing their businesses.

Wellbeing Improvement (WEMWBS 2024-25)



Age Profile of Participants 2024-25



Impact on Women

From annual monitoring and the independent VERAS Evaluation, participants reported:

- 87% felt more positive
- 84% increased confidence
- 83% built friendships
- 74% felt less anxious
- 92% felt fitter and healthier



Voices of Women

"I have my own sense of identity – just me, not just a mum."

– VERAS Project participant

"I leave feeling lighter."

– VERAS Project participant

"This class has been the most interesting thing I have done in years."

– Living Life to the Full

"The course helped me understand I am not alone with my challenges."

– Spring Clean Your Life

"This course put me back on the road – I feel more confident and calmer."

– I Can course participant

"It taught me to take time out of this busy world & enjoy the good things, nature & relaxation."

– Meditation & Journaling

"The instructor was amazing, very knowledgeable and explained things perfectly."

– Pilates

"Helps stop thinking about problems ... very releasing & good fun."

– Drumming

"So enjoyable and fun. Great for your mental health."

– Dancing Your Way to Health & Happiness

"Great course, more classes please."

– Coming Into Balance



"Fantastic teacher. So calming."

– Coming Into Balance

"Very therapeutic ... inclusive for all women."

– Meditation & Journaling

"Meeting new people, improving my level of fitness."

– Pilates

"Acceptance, adaptability, positivity all the way."

– Dancing Your Way to Health & Happiness

"Advice and tips have been really helpful ... I feel less overwhelmed."

– Spring Clean Your Life

Comments about FSWC

- Do not know what I'd do if FSWC was not there.
- I just wish FSWC continues in their success in helping women in this area.
- Thank you so much for everything. All the people of women centre you all are amazing. Looking forward to do more courses in new year
- I am so thankful that first steps is part of my life.
- It's simply a brilliant place to have.
- I love the Centre.
- I enjoy the courses FSWC offer, the venue is spotless & staff most welcoming. Thank you. It's my escape for an hour.
- Staff great, 100%.
- The Centre is amazing.
- The venue & staff exceptional.
- Really enjoy the courses & meeting with other people.
- I enjoy the courses FSWC offer, the venue is spotless & staff most welcoming. Thank you. It's my escape for an hour.
- Thank you so much for the Centre for the wonderful opportunity to attend courses. You are simply brilliant.
- Really enjoy the different courses I attend.
- I have attended numerous courses over the years. They are very well run. The venue is spotless and provides everything needed. Amanda is exceptional as is any other members of staff I have encountered. I really enjoy the classes.
- Just love this place. Thanks.
- Centre is amazing & staff so helpful & welcoming.

Why Does This Matters for Investment?

Investment in women's wellbeing builds resilience, reduces social isolation, and contributes to a healthier, more engaged workforce and potential workforce. Employers and funders benefit through:

- Improved health and reduced absenteeism
- Greater self-confidence and employability
- Social cohesion and stronger communities



Life Skills Report

Between April 2024 and March 2025, 185 women applied to improve their English and communication skills at First Steps Women’s Centre. Of these, 153 secured a place across 11 weekly classes, ranging from Pre-ESOL to Essential Skills.

- 161 qualifications awarded (pass rate: 82.5%)
- 67% retention rate across all courses
- 68% average attendance despite significant personal and employment barriers
- Participants represented 17 nationalities, strengthening diversity and cultural exchange in the local community.

This investment in women’s education is not only transforming individual lives but also creating measurable benefits for employers, local communities, and wider society.

Recruitment & Participation

Interest in Life Skills training has never been higher. With 185 applicants, 2024–25 marked one of our strongest recruitment years to date, reflecting women’s eagerness to learn in a safe, supportive environment.

Class sizes ranged from 12–20 learners in ESOL and Essential Skills, with sessions running 2–3 hours.

Retention by Class

Course	Started	Completed	Retention %
ESOL Entry Level 1	22	16	73
ESOL Entry Level 2 M	25	11	44
ESOL Entry Level 2 A	17	11	65
ESOL Entry Level 3	22	15	69
Pre-ESOL	12	12	100
Improve your English	25	17	68
TOTAL	123	82	67



Average Attendance Rates by Class (2024-25)

Class	Attendance %
ESOL Entry Level 1	62
ESOL Entry Level 2 M	68
ESOL Entry Level 2 A	68
ESOL Entry Level 3	74
Pre-ESOL	62
Improve your English	75
TOTAL	68



Achievements & Outcomes

In 2024–25, women achieved 161 Life Skills qualifications across Speaking & Listening, Reading, and Writing. Highlights include:

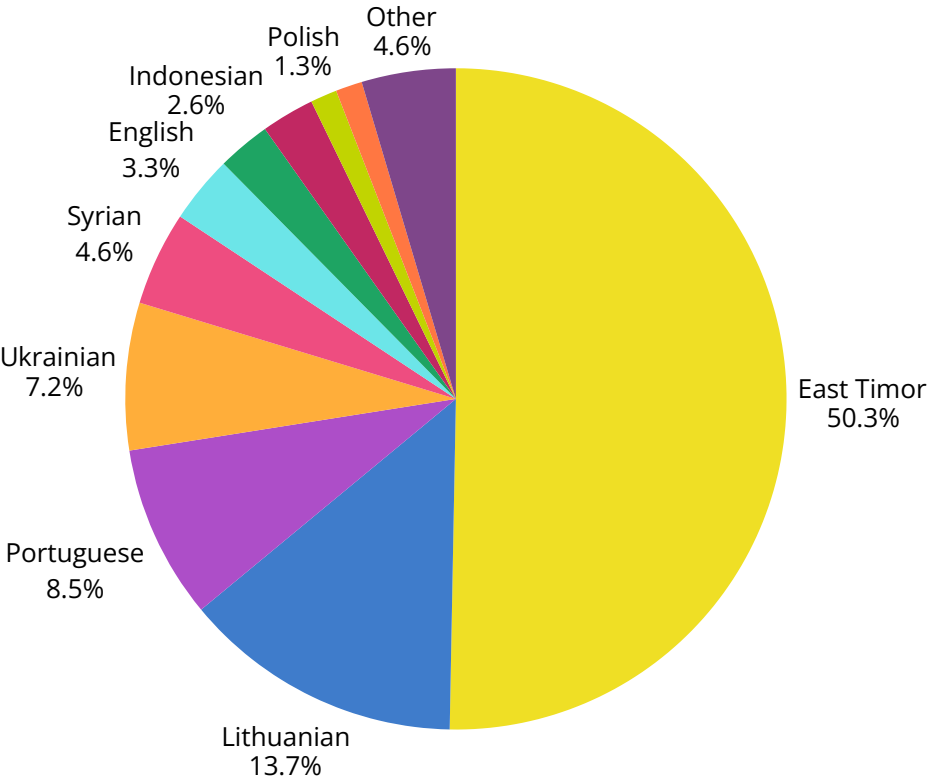
- 100% pass rates in several Reading exams (Entry Level 1 & 2M)
- High achievement in Speaking & Listening (92% pass rate for Entry 2A)
- Consistent progress from Pre-ESOL to higher entry levels

Beyond qualifications, women reported improved confidence in using English daily, better employability, and greater independence.

Diversity & Inclusion

Learners came from 17 different countries, representing a truly global community of women in Mid-Ulster. This diversity enriches local society, and supports employers seeking multilingual, culturally aware staff.

Nationalities	Numbers	Percentage of Total
East Timor	77	50.3
Lithuanian	21	13.7
Portuguese	13	8.5
Ukrainian	11	7.2
Syrian	7	4.6
Local	5	3.3
Indonesian	4	2.6
Slovak/Czech/Russian	4	2.6
Polish	2	1.3
Brazilian	2	1.3
Other	7	4.6
TOTAL	153	100%



Voices of Change

"Learning English here has given me the confidence to talk to my children's teachers."

– ESOL learner, Entry 2

"This course helped me get a job where I use English every day."

– Essential Skills learner

Pre-ESOL

One day a week, Theresa Boyle our Pre-ESOL tutor, worked with students who had more initial learning needs that would allow them to access Entry Level 1 and it's qualification route.

Some students were just 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 benefiting wanting to progress at the end of the year.

The students were from Guinea-Bissau, Portugal, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, Syria and Bulgaria.

Radius Housing

Special thanks to Blanaid Bruce and Radius Housing for their sponsorship of one of our ESOL classes.

Radius Housing sponsored the childcare, transport and tutor costs of a full ESOL programme.



First Steps Women's Centre EL1 ESOL class with their tutor Louise Cameron. Also present is Una Quinn ESOL tutor and Carmel Creaney Training & Education Co-ordinator at the recent celebration of Achievement Awards day.



Blanaid Bruce from Radius Housing with our ESOL Tutor Una Quinn and our Entry Level 2 ESOL class who recently completed their Entry level 2 ESOL qualification.



Our ESOL EL3 class who recently completed their ESOL qualification shown with tutor Una Quinn at our recent celebration of achievement day.

Building Confidence Through Learning

From April 2024 to March 2025, the Life Skills Programme at First Steps Women's Centre continued to provide vital English language and essential skills training to local and migrant women, supporting them to integrate, progress in education, and access employment opportunities.

Recruitment and Attendance

We received 185 applications for ESOL and Essential Skills Level 1 and 2 in Communication, one of the highest to date. Of these, 153 women enrolled by September 2024, attending classes two days per week in a supportive women's centre environment.

Average attendance across classes was 68%, with the highest retention (100%) in the Pre-ESOL group.

Achievements and Qualifications

A total of 161 Life Skills qualifications were achieved this year, with an overall pass rate of 82.5%.

"I feel more confident speaking to people in shops and at my child's school."

Highlights include 100% pass rates in several reading and writing exams, and strong results across all ESOL levels.

Our Diverse Student Community

Our learners came from 16 countries, including East Timor, Lithuania, Portugal, Syria, Ukraine, Brazil, Morocco, and Afghanistan. East Timorese women formed the largest group (50% of all learners).

Partnership in Essential Skills

We continue to work with Southern Regional College to deliver Essential Skills qualifications. This year, 17 students completed Level 1 or 2 Communication and are awaiting results.

Pre-ESOL Success

Our Pre-ESOL tutor worked with women with the most initial learning needs, including those newly arrived in Northern Ireland and those with low confidence from past education experiences.

The small group setting helped build confidence and many participants expressed a desire to progress to higher levels next year. 6 of these women set an accredited Entry Level 1 exam and passed.

"This class gave me the courage to try – now I know I can learn."

Impact at a Glance

- 185 applications received; 153 women enrolled
- 161 qualifications achieved; 82.5% pass rate
- Students from 16 countries
- Attendance averaged 68%
- 100% retention in Pre-ESOL group



Transport Report

April 2024 - March 2025

Total passengers: 1,657

Total runs: 694 approx.



Rural Economic Accelerator Programme

The REAP Programme is aimed to support “economically inactive” women into employment.

The women on this programme, could not be further from being “economically inactive” – the reality of their lives is that they are active mothers, carers, homework helpers, school run drivers, volunteers, confidantes, community builders, and so much more

Their contributions, though often unseen and unpaid, have been invaluable. And yet, when it came to employment, they faced barriers that were not of their making - barriers of confidence, of opportunity, of societal expectation, of childcare & transport.

REAP is about breaking down those barriers, equipping these women with the tools, the confidence, and the belief that they already had everything they needed within them to succeed.

In year two of the programme REAP has run 15 courses, promoting both “soft” and accredited skills. Table below shows the engagement per course:

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

TAKE YOUR FIRST STEPS INTO EMPLOYMENT

Thinking about getting into employment?
Want to turn your passions or skills into a career?
We can support you on your journey!

WE OFFER:

- Free childcare while you attend
- Free transport to/from classes
- Free counselling
- Free benefits advice
- 1-1 Mentoring

YOU CAN JOIN CLASSES IN:

- First aid
- Food hygiene
- Digital Literacy
- Managing money
- Wellbeing
- And much more...

AND BENEFIT FROM THIS...

- Weekly job club
- Confidence building
- Interview prep
- Work experience/placement

JOIN THE REAP PROGRAMME NOW

For more information, contact Olivia
fswc.olivia@gmail.com

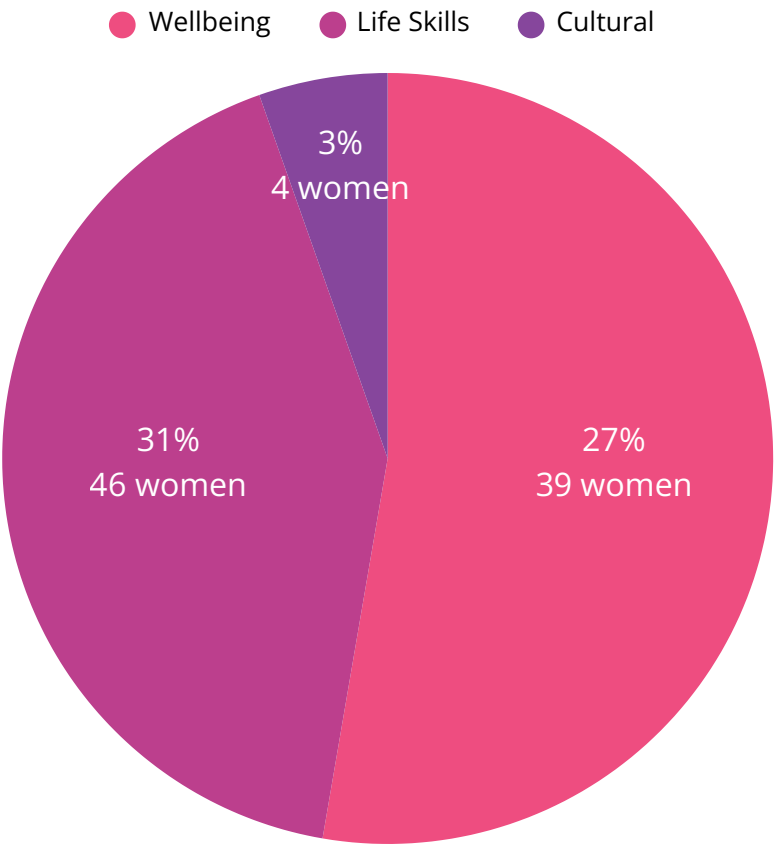
Funded by UK Government

Rural Economic Accelerator Programme

POWERED BY LEVELLING UP

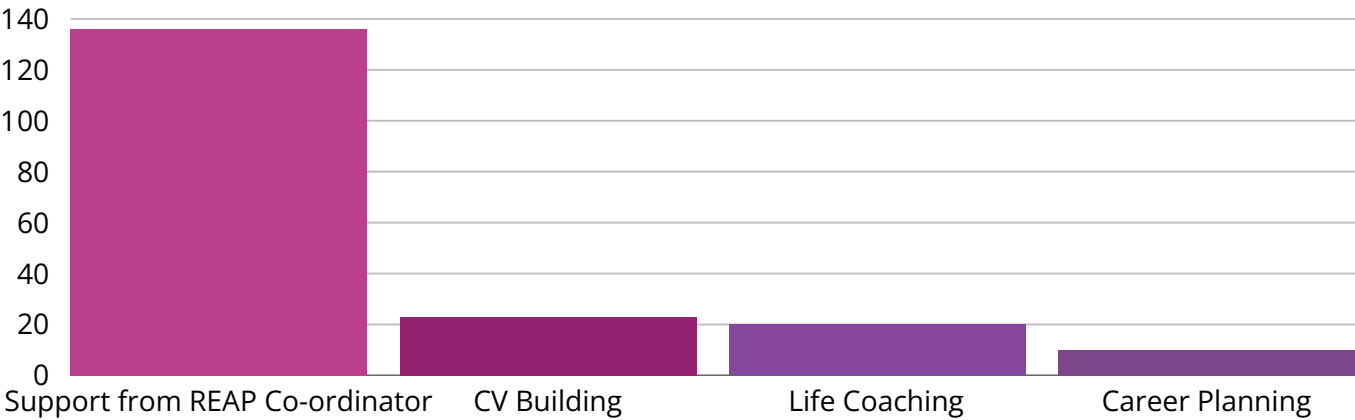
Course	Engagement
Recreational IT (April)	8 women
Recreational IT (Nov)	8 women
Smartphone Photography	10 women
Level 1 First Aid (June)	10 women
Level 1 First Aid (Nov)	9 women
Level 1 First Aid (Magherafelt)	9 women
Level 1 Paediatric First Aid	7 women
Level 1 Mental Health First Aid	15 women
Feel the Fear: And Do It Anyway (June)	11 women
Feel the Fear: And Do It Anyway (Feb)	12 women
Feel the Fear: And Do It Anyway (Magherafelt)	12 women
OCN Level 1 Business Admin	9 women
Leadership & Management	11 women
Qualsafe Level 3 Education & Training	8 women
Job Club	31 women

Additionally, the women on REAP also benefitted from the range of courses facilitated in the Centre. Table below shows the engagement of REAP women on each programme in First Steps Women’s Centre:



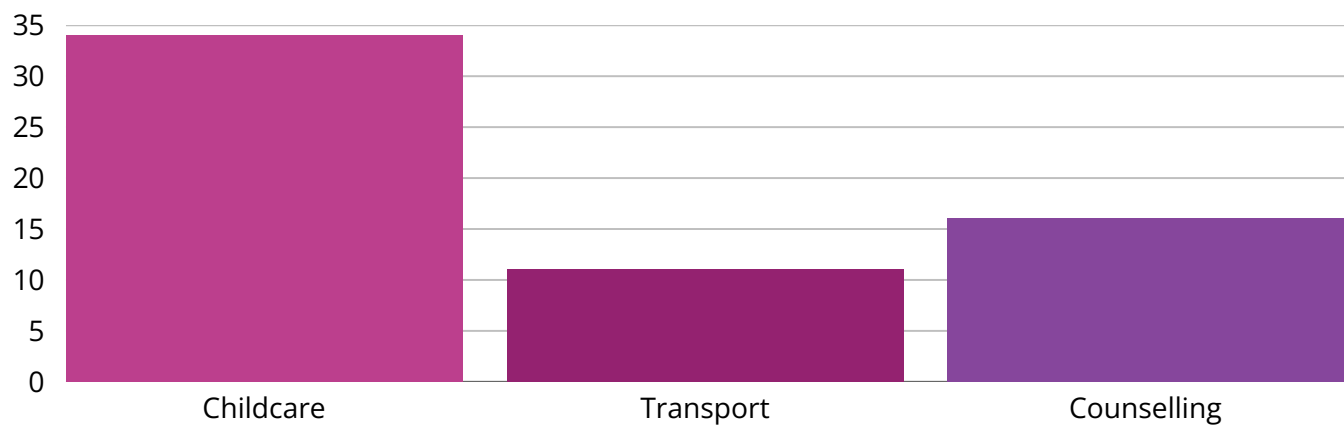
Similarly, the REAP Programme offered 1-1 support for women on either end of the spectrum, offering both CV building sessions and life coaching sessions.

1-1 Appointments



Another core aspect of the REAP programme was the availability of support services for the women. Breaking down barriers to employment, or participation in general, was a priority for the REAP programme and First Steps Women's Centre was able to tackle core barriers through its free childcare, free transport and free counselling for any women who need it.

Support Services



Craft & Wellbeing Fair (IWD)

The Wellbeing Co-ordinator & REAP Co-ordinator organised this event for International Women's Day 2025. The aim of this event was to give women an opportunity to showcase their skills and empower them through their own abilities, expertise, and creativity. It created a space for them that they might not get elsewhere. 15 women participated in hosting a stall, 10 of whom were REAP participants.



Job Club

The job club is a weekly session for any women on REAP. Our sessions ranged from job focused classes such as interview skills & job searching as well as sessions aimed at building confidence and personal development. These included routine management, leadership skills, stress management.

Over 40 women engaged in the job club. Below shows the average attendance for the job club sessions.

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

Job Club
Wednesdays
1pm - 3pm

WEDNESDAY 18TH SEP 1pm-3pm Welcome to Reap: Coffee & Chat	WEDNESDAY 6TH NOV 1pm-3pm Confidence building & self-advocacy
WEDNESDAY 25TH SEP 1pm-3pm Raising Aspirations & setting goals	WEDNESDAY 13TH NOV 1pm-3pm Communication skills for difficult situations/people
WEDNESDAY 2ND OCT 1pm-3pm Recognising your skills & qualities	WEDNESDAY 20TH NOV 1pm-3pm Entrepreneurship: Tips for turning your hobby into your income
WEDNESDAY 9TH OCT 1pm-3pm Cvs and Cover Letters: Tips, tools and resources	WEDNESDAY 27TH NOV 1pm-3pm Balancing life & work
WEDNESDAY 16TH OCT 1pm-3pm Job Searching: Tips and tools	WEDNESDAY 4TH DEC 1pm-3pm Stress management & resilience building
WEDNESDAY 23RD OCT 1pm-3pm Interview skills	WEDNESDAY 11TH DEC 1pm-3pm Christmas special

ALL FREE TO ATTEND AND OPEN TO ANYONE UNEMPLOYED

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ATTEND PLEASE EMAIL
FSWC.OLIVIA@GMAIL.COM

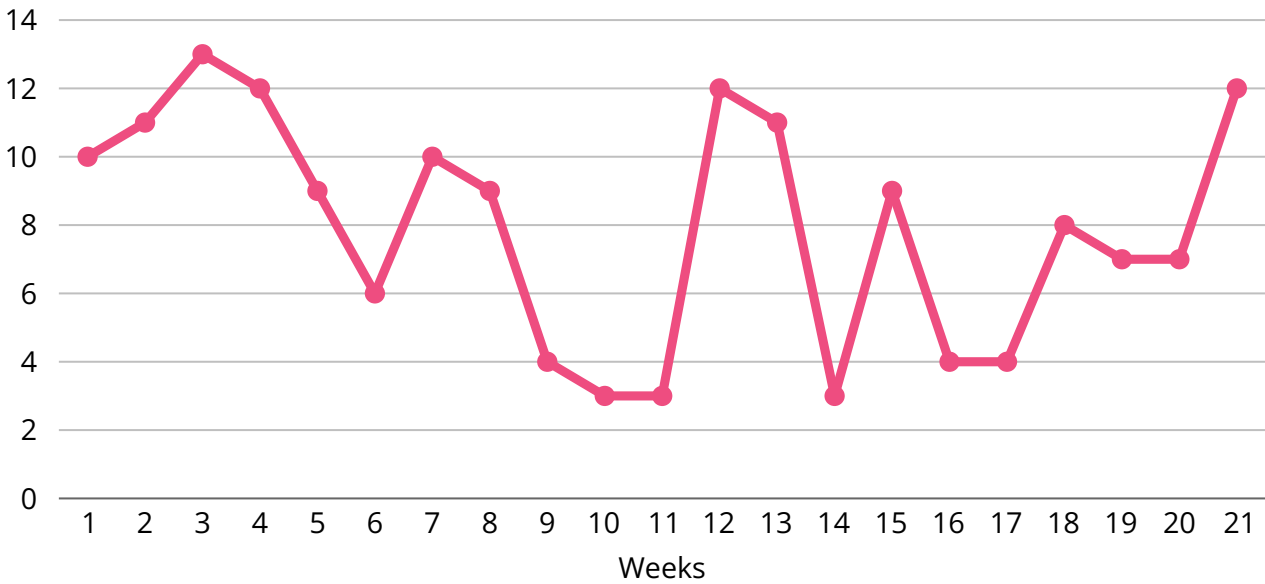
21a William Street, Dungannon | PH: 02887727648 | @firststepswomens



Funded by
UK Government



Attendance



Outcomes

From April 24 – March 25, the REAP Programme recruited 147 women (in addition to the 70 women from year 1 of the programme). This is a 9% increase on our overall target engagement.

We also maintained the progression target (20% into employment) as we had 20% of our overall participants transition into employment, 11% into volunteering, 4% into formal education & 77% continuing their journey at FSWC.

Outcome	Where
Working	6 in hospitality 1 in accountancy 6 in factory 6 in retail 1 in healthcare 1 in counselling 1 in interpreting 5 in childcare/school 1 in caring 1 in admin 2 in cleaning 13 in self-employment Total : 44 women
Volunteering	2 in childcare 5 in catering 13 in charity/community work 4 in admin Total: 24 women
Attending courses at FSWC	168 women

The success of this programme is much more than numbers and stats, it is the intangible development of our women, realising that their voices matter, that their skills are valuable, and that they have every right to claim their space in the world as well as the workforce. That to me, is the real success.



Testimonials

"The job club and First Steps was a life line to myself and no doubt others."

"I can't thank you enough for the services you have provided in the short space of time that I have been with you. You provide a great service which enabled me to gain employment which I am very grateful for."

"The nicest thing of all is bringing a smile to someone's face, and to make sure that person knows how much they are appreciated. Nothing is ever too much for you and you always go out of your way to look out for us all as well as offer extra support whenever needed. A lot of us would not be where we are today without all that you do, and sometimes we forget to say thank you. You are a credit to First Steps."

"Without this opportunity to present myself at the fair I wouldn't have pushed myself forward or made the opportunity happen for myself to get my name and business idea up and running. I am forever grateful for your email that gave me the gentle push I needed at just the right time."

"What an honour it was to be apart of such a beautiful day celebrating Women's Day...First steps for women...provided me help with crèche for my youngest daughter. The crèche is a wonderful place as my daughter loves and enjoys her time here. The supported me each step of the way encouraging me and building up my confidence Olivia and Amanda are true cheerleaders. I felt incredibly special and honoured to be apart of such an amazing event. It was an emotional experience but in such a very special way. I hope to now thrive and know the support is there if and when needed. Thank you so much for letting me be apart of such a wonderful day."

"Thank you for creating a space where women can shine, grow and be celebrated."

"Thanks to you and our beloved centre, I found my job."



Accounts Report

Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet) as at 31 March 2025

	31/03/2025	31/03/2024
Fixed Assests	£292,340	£319,673
Current Assets		
Grant Income Receivable	£84,378	£75,055
Prepayments	£2,910	£2,910
Bank	£437,507	£312,688
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	£524,796	£390,652
Current Liabilities	£6,367	£7,595
New Current Assets (CA_CL)	£518,429	£383,058
Net Assets	£810,769	£702,731
Represented By		
Restricted Funds	£448,830	£369,902
Designated Funds	£150,000	£150,000
Unrestricted Funds	£211,939	£182,829
TOTAL	£810,769	£702,731

These accounts are prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act relating to small companies and constitute the annual accounts required by the Companies Act 2006 and are for circulation to members of the company.

The financial statements were approved by the trustees on 5 November 2025 and signed on its behalf:

Nicola Quinn
Chairperson

Company Number: NI066869

Income from Charitable Activities

	12 Months Ending	Unrestricted	Restricted	12 Months Ending
Grant Income	31/03/2025	31/03/2025	31/03/2025	31/03/2024
Department for Communities - CIF	£62,710	-	£62,710	£59,271
Department for Communities - WCCF	£39,727	-	£39,727	£38,189
Mid Ulster District Council -Strategic Community Development Grant	£6,000	-	£6,000	£7,000
The Pathway Fund	£16,500	-	£16,500	£15,000
TEO (MEDF)	£41,223	-	£41,223	£41,223
Charities Aid Foundation (CAF)	£2,310	-	£2,310	£2,500
Mid Ulster District Council - Community Development	£200	-	£200	£100
Radius Housing	£12,178	-	£12,178	-
Choice Housing	£10,211	-	£10,211	£8,339
Big Lottery - VERA'S Project	£98,822	-	£98,822	£93,035
Dungannon Credit Union	£875	-	£875	-
WRAP - Accounts Receivables	£1,230	-	£1,230	-
Big Lottery - Heritage Fund	£115,521	-	£115,521	-
Esme Mitchell Grant	£1,000	-	£1,000	-
Victoria Holmes Trust	£2,650	-	£2,650	-
HSE	£1,000	-	£1,000	-
UKPF - Levelling Up - REAP Project	£168,592	-	£168,592	£106,899
The Halifax Foundation	-	-	-	£5,000
The Openwork Foundation	-	-	-	£15,000
STEP - Accounts Receivable	-	-	-	£240
BREATHE DONATION CENTURION MINGT L	-	-	-	£93
SWC - Accounts Receivable	-	-	-	£424
DUNBIA UK	-	-	-	£200
Funding EAD Clawback (23/24)	£269	-	£269	-
DFS - Cost of Living Intervention 23/24	-	-	-	£1,500
TOTAL	£580,481	-	£580,481	£394,013

Analysis of expenditure on charitable activities

	12 Months Ending	Unrestricted	Restricted	12 Months Ending
Expenditure on charitable activities:	31/03/2025	31/03/2025	31/03/2025	31/03/2024
Wages and salaries	£242,855	-	£242,855	£202,868
Employers Pension	£2,984	-	£2,984	£2,129
Staff Life Insurance	£1,845	-	£1,845	-
Staff T&S /Expenses	£2,272	-	£2,272	£1,782
Staff training and recruitment	£2,408	-	£2,408	£1,582
Facilitation & Events	£1,362	-	£1,362	£3,299
Tutor Costs and Exam Fees	£67,832	-	£67,832	£60,020
Participant Travel	£1,465	-	£1,465	£1,419
Participant Training & Course Materials	£736	-	£736	£372
Volunteer Expenses	£1,742	-	£1,742	£1,307
Refunds	-	-	-	£319
Rent and Rates	£16,278	-	£16,278	£16,047
Light and heat	£5,256	-	£5,256	£10,297
Telephone	£3,016	-	£3,016	£3,545
Printing, postage and stationery	£3,102	-	£3,102	£3,895
IT support	£4,364	-	£4,364	£7,379
Motor expenses	£1,140	-	£1,140	£306
Repairs and maintenance	£7,765	-	£7,765	£7,973
Insurance	£3,934	-	£3,934	£5,925
Small Equipment Purchase	£1,796	-	£1,796	£5,898
Creche Equipment	£1,820	-	£1,820	£1,986
Professional Fees	-	-	-	£870
Subscriptions	-	-	-	£85
Health and Safety	£120	-	£120	£24
Donations to other Charities	-	-	-	£550
Emergency Assistance	£562	-	£562	£1,230
Misc Expenses	-	-	-	£1,077

Analysis of expenditure on charitable activities

	12 Months Ending	Unrestricted	Restricted	12 Months Ending
Expenditure on charitable activities:	31/03/2025	31/03/2025	31/03/2025	31/03/2024
Advertising	£7,920	-	£7,920	£2,162
Participant comfort expenses	£2,003	-	£2,003	£1,322
Counselling	£3,010	-	£3,010	£1,854
Evaluation Fee	£1,971	-	£1,971	-
Depreciation of tangible assets	£27,333	-	£27,333	£29,782
Support Costs - Note 7	£64,856	-	£64,856	£65,877
TOTAL	£482,853	-	£482,853	£488,561

Restricted Expenditure on charitable activities for 2025 £482,853 (2024 £488,561).

Funders 2024-2025



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn
Pobal

Mánnystrie o
Communities



The
Executive Office

www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk



THE OPENWORK
FOUNDATION

Proudly making a difference





**NATIONAL
LOTTERY FUNDED**



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council



The
Pathway
Fund



DUNGANNON
CREDIT UNION LIMITED



21a William Street,
Dungannon, Co.Tyrone
BT70 1DX,
Tel: 028 87727648
www.firststepswomenscentre.org