

ANNUAL REPORT 2012 - 2013





CONTENTS

Chairperson's Report	2
Chief Executive Officer's Report	3
Health Promotion	5
Information Technology	8
Life Skills	11
Crèche	15
Information Officer	16
Benefits Checker Service	18
Accounts	20

Chairperson's Report

I am delighted to report that First Steps Women's Centre (FSWC) continues to provide an unparalleled resource to the local community, benefiting from the high demand for its many services and the actions that the Management Team took during the recession to reduce costs and improve efficiency.

Our consolidation strategy has served us well and I have no doubt that this year's strong performance results from the fundamental strength of FSWC and the actions that we have taken over recent years. Despite the Recession, we have continued to invest in new initiatives such as the Benefit Checker Service and continue to meet and exceed all our programme targets.

During the Recession FSWC took early and decisive action to reduce costs in line with reduced funding. However, this was not done at the expense of our participants, or to the determent of our services and has meant we have become a leaner, fitter and more effective Organisation. It has always been my belief that the most important investment that a company makes is the one that it makes in its people. I have never ceased to be impressed by the enthusiasm, professionalism and dedication of FSWC's employees and volunteers who are integral to everything we do.

It has been a privilege to be Chairperson of FSWC for the last three years. FSWC is well positioned to grow in the next five years supported by strong positions in our core markets. We look forward to the future, new developments and the next round of European Social Fund Funding.

I would like to thank all of the funders for their significant contributions. They include Department for Employment & Learning, European Social Fund, Department for Social Development (including Neighbourhood Renewal), Lloyds/TSB Foundation, Pfizer, MSE, Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council, Southern Health Trust, Surestart Dungannon, BBC Children In Need, Santander, Public Health Agency and Pilgrims Trust and Big Lottery.

Maria Donnelly

Chairperson

Chief Executive Officer's Report

During this year First Steps Women's Centre has continued to provide a range of excellent programmes and services as well as developing new options for women. The Centre continues to listen to the needs of women and to identify new areas of work. These include developing an Allotment Project, employing bi-lingual crèche staff and dedicating a staff member to help identify unclaimed benefits. The Centre continues to maintain a high level of retention and pass rates across all its courses. This continued success is down to the dedication of our staff, the outstanding services that are on offer and the excellent support our staff provide to women attending the Centre. This support includes one to one mentoring, counselling and also the introduction of a new Benefits Checker Service.

Benefits Checker Service

This service was introduced for the start of the new term in September 2012. This post was funded through grant aid from Santander and Money Saving Expert. The service is open to men and women – both young and old. In 12 months the Benefits Checker Service has been able to identify almost £60k of additional benefits. The main areas identified were Tax Credits (Working & Child) and Housing Benefits. This is quite an amazing yet not surprising achievement. Reports from local government this year indicated over £15 million in unclaimed benefits.

Neighbourhood Renewal Health Programme

First Steps Women's Centre was awarded funding in November 2012 to provide a series of Health Promotional programmes for people from both Coalisland and Dungannon Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. The programme will run until March 2015. The programmes will focus both on physical and mental health and will be to provide new innovative participant led programmes.

Childcare Changes

In late August 2012 a decision was made to relocate our childcare service into the dance studio within Dungannon Youth Resource Centre. The Youth Centre had recently been refurbished and was an ideal setting for our childcare service. Our crèche continues to thrive. We now have two bi-lingual crèche assistants and 9 different nationalities attending.

East Timorese Women

The Centre also witnessed a significant increase in use of the Centre by East Timorese women. This success was down to a partnership with Dungannon Surestart and funding from Southern Health Trust and Pfizer. This funding helped utilise the services of an East Timorese speaker who was able to assist in recruiting East Timorese women living in Dungannon.

Volunteers

A number of new volunteers were recruited during this period. They included a minibus driver and also a young Polish woman who assisted with interpretation and translation duties. The Centre's Directors are all volunteers and they have worked hard with the staff to build a viable and essential service for the women of Dungannon and further afield.

Strategic Development

The Centre holds regular planning meetings with both staff and Directors. These are designed to plan ahead, to inform stakeholders of what direction the organisation is moving and to ensure that each staff member fully understands how they fit into the organisation. It also provides an opportunity for staff and directors to get to know the work of others as well.

We have devised a logic diagram approach to our Operational Plan. This is an ideal way for all to understand both our strategic aims and objectives and our operational programme.

Appreciation

I would like to offer my sincere thanks and gratitude to all the staff, volunteers and Directors who have made this year another productive and successful one. Despite being in a harsh recession we continue to provide a vast range of services, programmes and activities. This is down to the dedication of a wonderful team of people.

Michael McGoldrick

Chief Executive Officer

Health Promotion

Across all of the Health Promotion courses and workshops this year we were able to offer 224 places.



Other Activities Undertaken Included:

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- Mind, Body, Spirit, Morning (open event)
- Breast Screening Information Session 8 participants
- Cervical Screening Information Session 9 participants
- Wellbeing Practices Day 9 participants
 - Confidence with a Splash of Colour 13 Participants

LIVE AND LEARN

In 2009 we accessed funding from the Big Lottery's Live and Learn programme to fund the wages of the Health Promotion Worker for five years. We are now at the end of year 4. This funding application was made in Partnership with fourteen Women's Centres throughout NI. The funding has been instrumental in enabling us to establish Health Promotion as one of our core services.

FSWC Health Promotion targets for the 2012/2013 financial year were

as follows:

To reach 100 women in total:

- 50 beneficiaries for Outcome 1: Physical Health a minimum of 25 new women in addition to 25 women who will progress on to additional health promotion courses
- 50 beneficiaries for Outcome 2: Mental Health a minimum of 25 new women in addition to 25 women who will progress on to additional health promotion courses.

Actual targets achieved (from April 2012 to April 2013) 18 courses and workshops

Total beneficiaries 212 (women enrolled on Health Promotion Programmes)

- 116 Physical Health (57 of who were new to the Health Promotion Programme)
- 96 Mental Health (42 of who were new to the Health Promotion Programme)

Some Comments From Course Participants

Yoga and Relaxation

...the course improved my confidence and ...has taught me invaluable relaxation techniques.

'The course was very enjoyable, course tutor was fantastic – our group was very friendly. I felt very relaxed within the group and would recommend this course to anyone'.

Personal Development

"Just it's overwhelming what I have achieved so far. Thank you."

"A very good and important course to help your self esteem/confidence and realise what you can do to move on in life."

Minding me

"The way everybody could participate and the information given which you could apply to everyday life."

I liked meeting old and new friends, good atmosphere. Course could have been longer, it was so enjoyable."

Menopause 4 Thought

"I enjoyed it all, as always. It helped me to keep focused from one week to the next."

"I found it very helpful. The tutor was warm, friendly, understanding and made everyone feel included and valued. It helped me to look at issues in a more positive way and take action."

Information Technology & Recreational

Courses

Introduction

In the academic year commencing in September 2012 - 21 Information Technology and ancillary courses (see Table One) have been co-ordinated and run by First Steps Women's Centre. These courses provided 240 accredited and non-accredited training places for women in a variety of subjects ranging from Advanced ECDL to Digital Photography. Courses varied in length from 6 weeks to 28 weeks in length. The overall average attendance rate for 2012-13 was 89%. The average pass rate was 95%.



Graph One: Average Attendance

IT & Ancillary Courses 2012 – 2013			
Course Title	Attendance Rate		
Beginners IT 2013	89%		
CLAiT Certificate 2012	89%		
CLAiT Certificate 2013	97%		
Digital Photography 2012	86%		
Digital Photography 2013	60%		
ECDL	89%		
ECDL Fast Track	96%		
ECDL Advanced	91%		
First Aid at Work	100%		
Flower Arranging 1	100%		
Flower Arranging 2	100%		
Sage Accounts Level 1 2012	79%		
Sage Accounts Level 1 2013	94%		
Sage Accounts Level 2 2012	93%		
Sage Accounts Level 2 2013	84%		
Sage Accounts Fast Track	96%		
Text Processing 2012	87%		
Text Processing 2013	91%		
Text Processing Fast Track	96%		

Table One: Attendance for IT Courses

Course Feedback & Evaluation

Formative and summative comprehensive evaluation was carried out for each course and overall feedback was extremely positive. Service Provider Evaluation was also conducted during this academic year. Feedback from our tutors suggests they are extremely happy with all aspects of the provision and support they receive from First Steps Women's Centre.

Participant Testimonials

"Honestly couldn't say a negative thing about course. Truly enjoyed it, as for the staff at the Women's Centre they are all so warm, friendly and naturally take away any nerves."

"Excellent course, excellent tutor, excellent facilities, very welcoming." "Excellent childcare centre made it very easy to complete the course as childcare was on hand and all parts of the course were excellent." "I felt nervous at the beginning as I hadn't done any courses for a while. I enjoyed it once I got started and with help and guidance have become more confident."

Additional Developments Fundraising

The IT Department also successfully obtained a £100 from Digital Unite for our work in helping people to access computers for the first time.

Investors in People

Work continues towards our liP Action Plan including a review which has resulted in the development of new strategic aims and objectives. The new system of operational planning using the Outcomes Approach Logic Model has been ongoing and has proven to be a very useful resource for our next liP assessment which is planned for January 2014.

Policy/Procedure Development

Work on developing new, and reviewing existing, policies and procedures is ongoing.

Staff Training

A number of In-house Courses were organised for staff during the year including:

- First Aid at Work Training
- Manual Handling
- Strategic Planning and Operational Planning
- Sage Accounts
- ECDL
- ECDL Advanced

New Courses For September 2013

The timetable of IT courses for September 2013 to June 2014 has been devised. A wide variety of courses catering for different levels of knowledge and interests will be offered, from the ever popular Beginners IT to ECDL Advanced. Given the recent success of our Sage suite of courses we intend to offer Sage Payroll for the first time this year.

Key Action Points for 2013 – 2014

- Provision of high quality IT/ancillary courses to meet participant demand.
- Creation of progression routes within the IT course framework.
- Provision of unique and innovative courses targeted at 16-24 year old participants needs.
- Maintenance and continuation of IiP Silver directives.

Life Skills Report

This year there were 98 participants over 9 DEL courses. Class size in ESOL was 14 participants with smaller classes of 8 for Essential Skills Average retention was 79%, average attendance of 78% and pass rate 99.66% of those entered.

ESOL

All candidates were initially assessed to place them in the group best suited to ability. There continues to be a huge demand for ESOL and we are fortunate to have received Neighbourhood Renewal funding to run 2 Pre-ESOL classes commencing April 2013.

Comments from ESOL participants:

"The course is very good. I like the tutor." (Entry 1 student) *"I like coming here."* (Entry 2 student)

Literacy

Literacy students at Level 1 & 2 produce a portfolio and the standard this year was exceptionally high under the guidance of our new Literacy Tutor, Michael Murphy.

Comments from Literacy Participants:

"I have found the course very interesting and have certainly gained new skills."

"I found the tutor to be very good at explaining things I didn't understand. I really hope you offer GCSE in the future." "I have really enjoyed my time on this course and my tutor has been very helpful and encouraging."

"I really was very blessed by this course. I enjoyed the class and thought our teacher was very good. Overall I feel encouraged to continue with further education courses at this centre."

"Very blessed by having childcare facilities on-site. Gold Star." "I would recommend to a friend. The tutor was excellent to work with and they are excellent to help you."

Numeracy

Lorraine Abbott, Numeracy tutor continues to get exceptional results helping women to overcome their negative beliefs about their own ability to achieve.

Comments from Numeracy participants:

"This will help me with my kids to do their maths homework." "The Centre is extremely helpful. The tutor is brilliant and very easy to work with."

Money Management

This has rapidly become another essential skill for living, particularly in these recessionary times with high unemployment and many families struggling to meet their everyday commitments. We were fortunate to have funding from the Money Saving Expert to pay for some hours of Benefits Advice and to deliver 1 six week and a more detailed 14 week Money Management course. This training covers budgeting, credit, avoiding debt and learning to shop around to get the best deal.

Neighbourhood Renewal Health Project also funding the shorter 6 week class to help alleviate some of the stress and worry people are experiencing around money issues.



Comments on Money Management – Tutor Jenny Sally

"This was a beneficial course with good discussion, ideas on managing finances and good tips for saving money."

"Enjoyed the course. Has helped me sort bills out and learnt about the interest on credit cards and how to save a bit of money. Would like to continue to the next part of the course."

"I enjoyed this course, the company of other adults, the ways we learned how to save our money and the crack was also very good."

Community Allotment

We currently have an allotment leased from Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council in Dungannon Park. This aim of this project is to increase knowledge, awareness and skills in the target group in relation to fruit and vegetable production, preparation and consumption and to promote positive health and well-being. Funding was obtained from the Public Health Agency.

Objectives were met including:

The establishment of a Steering Group which managed and developed a Community Garden.

The group met monthly to develop the project plan, oversee recruitment (12-15 women) within the Centre Users and from other local agencies and community groups, manage the budget and evaluation process.

Training Component covered:

Garden Design, Planting, Maintenance and Harvesting. Provide opportunities for physical activities outdoors as well as opportunities for positive social interaction and development. The Project recruited women of mixed ages and different social and ethnic backgrounds particularly women from low income families.

Cook It:

Enhance participants' skills in preparing and cooking fruit and vegetable, increase knowledge of nutritional value of fruit and vegetables, develop more positive attitudes towards its consumption making healthy choices easier by providing covering eating nutritiously on a budget.

PFIZER Project

Initially the project was with a group of 15 East Timorese women to address the inequality in access to antenatal, maternal and child health care services for East Timorese women in the Dungannon Sure Start area. We actually worked with 29 families.

The main barriers to equal access are language/cultural issues which are exacerbated by social conditions. The client group have complex needs which require an intensive intervention which our project aimed to address in an innovative and holistic way with

following activities:

- Language barrier Provide English language classes 1 per week for 30 weeks in two locations – Dungannon West and FSWC.
- Dietary advice & cooking to improve nutrition for children
- Family Money Management to combat poverty

- Stress Management classes for improved mental health
- Awareness raising of domestic violence issues (particularly relevant to client group)

Sure Start funded the childcare element of the programme and we also employed Marialva Alves to provide interpretive support with funding from the Southern Trust Early Years fund. This made completing childcare registration, pre and post evaluation questionnaires and general communication much easier.

Karolina Wojtania, our Polish volunteer assisted with recording questionnaire results. The classes have now finished and we had a lovely celebratory lunch on 14th June 2013 cooked by Teresa Sutton and Marli Wilson.



Overall in the past year there have been 58 Non-DEL participants and 98 DEL participants giving a total of 156 participants.

Plans for September 2013

Continue with ESOL, Essential Skills, Money Management and gardening. New Classes will include employability and business enterprise. Grundvig European Programme – Joan McCool has secured a funded place on a transnational visit **14 October 2013 - 18 October 2013 Location: Germany (Düsseldorf, Germany)** on the theme of Social Inclusion and Migrants.

FSWC Crèche

The Crèche commenced the September 2012 term in new premises in Dungannon Youth Club which provided more space for the children and gave us access to the gym which helped the children settle in very well.

Three new members of staff commenced work and have fully integrated themselves into the team.

During the year the Crèche had successful visits from the Environmental Health Officer and our Early Years advisor.

All policies, procedures and enrolment forms have been revised and updated In line with the Childminding and Day Care Minimum Standards 2012.

We continue to provide childcare for children from 9 different nationalities which creates a unique and diverse play environment.

Attendance

Overall attendance was excellent this year:

- 68 attendances from September and December
- 83 attendances from January to June
- 1513 Sure Start places this year

Evaluations

Feedback from mothers who used the Crèche service:

Staff are very welcoming and flexible. My child is very settled in this environment and it encourages me to further my education knowing that he is happy. Great work.

I feel that the staff maintains good communication with me regarding my child and the Childcare news in the newsletter. I feel my child is welcomed and made to feel special when he/she is dropped off.

I feel that the environment, equipment and activity programs are preparing my child for their next stage of development.

Information Officer Report

Facebook

From December 2012 - May 2013 the 'likes' have risen by 48%.

Website

We continue to improve and update our website. The name of the website was changed to www.firststepswomenscentre.org in order to have a more visible connection with FSWC.

Website Statistics for 2012 - 2013	
Average visitors to website for 2012	385
Average new visitors	65%
Average returners	35%
Average pages viewed	5.5
Average visitors from Jan-May 2013	407
Average new visitors	59%
Average returners	41%
Average pages viewed	5.6

Currently we are developing mobile phone/iPad compatibility for our website.

Yell (Hibu)

To date we have 1202 views - 33 of these coming from mobile phones/iPads.

Online Prospectus of Women's Courses – Women's Resource Development Agency

From May 2012 – April 2013: 2,074 visits to the website over the year 12,307 page views 74% new visitors 26% returning visitors

Making a Difference in the Community

In April the Original Factory Shop chose FSWC for "Making a Difference in the Community" as their chosen Charity for 2013. So far they have raised \pounds 700 for FSWC.

Advertising

A new corporate brochure has been designed outlining the range of services being provided by First Steps Women's Centre, and will be used to market the Centre over the coming year.

Neighbourhood Renewal and Existing Courses

To promote our new Neighbourhood Renewal health courses leaflets have been distributed in the Coalisland and Dungannon areas. In total, 15,000 leaflets were distributed door to door to promote our courses.

Open Day

Two successful Open Days were held this year in The Cornmill, Coalisland and First Steps Women's Centre, Dungannon.

Information Days

First Steps Women's Centre was represented at a number of community events during the year providing details of the range of services provided.

Fundraising

In December, a Christmas Coffee Morning and raffle were held in FSWC and the total raised was £600.

In April, Dungannon Rugby Club kindly hosted a quiz night with proceeds raised going to FSWC. A great night was had by all who attended and the total amount raised was £450.80.

Benefit Checker Service

At First Steps Women's Centre we reach specific social groups who are some of the most vulnerable when it comes to poverty and social exclusion: including women with little or no educational qualifications, pensioners and foreign nationals. In August 2012 we received funding from Santander and Money Saving Expert in order to run a benefit check service at FSWC for everyone.

Since we started in September 2012 our benefit check service we have had a total of 173 referrals, with 161 attending (93%). This is a combination of one-to-one benefit checks and group discussions with local voluntary groups, but does not take into consideration informal advice given to people without conducting a formal benefit check. To June 2013 FSWC Benefit Checker service has successfully found **£59,449** in extra benefit entitlement for people and that figure is constantly rising. From the information given at interviews Pete Maguire, who co-ordinates the Service, found the total potential benefit to be around £146,357.



A total of 120 face-to-face benefit checks have been carried out and extra benefit entitlement for 46 of those (38%) being discovered. Of those 46, 13 have been successful (28%). Eight of whom have 15 children between them. This extra money found (£59,449) will have a significant positive effect on those children's standard of living, and potentially easing the burden on those people's lives. 41% of the potential benefit entitlement has been successfully claimed.

As well as holding one-to-one interviews in our premises we also have partnership arrangements in place with other community and voluntary organisations. We have a fast track referral agreement set up with the local Citizens Advice Bureau for those who have more complicated issues including Migrant's being refused benefits or people appealing decisions.

In addition we provide an outreach facility at The Vineyard every Thursday for two hours. The Vineyard is a Christian organisation who runs an outreach programme where they meet members of the public who are struggling with money and debt issues. They also run a food bank for the most vulnerable. We are also in regular contact from the local Sure Start group, asking advice and also referring clients to us. We have also gone to Sure Start groups to talk to them about the changes in the benefit system. Other community groups we have visited include senior citizens groups, Family Support Organisations (RAFT) and other training organisations (Rowan Tree).

We follow up on appointments by sending out evaluation forms to be completed. Of the 99 forms sent out we have received 24 back (24%). Results and feedback have been excellent. The evaluation results combined with the amount of unclaimed benefit found in just seven months (September 2012 to June 2013) just goes to show what a valuable service we run.

It is easy to put a monitory value on the benefits we have been able to find for people, but it is our belief that the social impact is far greater. The extra benefits we have found can have significant positive effects on people's physical and mental health. It may relieve some of the stresses that these people may be facing. Some of these families may not be able to feed and clothe their children properly, and these extra benefits may prevent those children living in poverty. Current statistics suggest that 20% of children in Dungannon are currently living in poverty.

benefit found:



Financial Accounts

FIRST STEPS WOMEN'S CENTRE Detailed Statement of Financial Activities For the year ended 31 March 2013

	2013 £	2012 £
Incoming resources		
Incoming resources from generating funds:		
Voluntary income		
Gift AID	5,705	7,690
Donations	15,520	14,087
Other Income	56	2,073
DSD	103,425	108,429
Sure Start	11,484	9,996
Dungannon & South Tyrone BC	4,035	3,390
New Life Directions	3,600	-
Live and Learn Funding	15,214	12,652
Lloyds TSB	5,000	-
EGSA	120	2,570
Neighbourhood Renewal	5,915	38,322
DEL/ESF WTEE 19410	189,679	225,855
John Moores Foundation	-	5,000
LESTAS	-	402
PBNI	-	3,889
Children in Need	4,500	5,500
SH & SCT	2,376	374
Early Years Development Fund	2,340	-
Pfizer	9,543	-
MSE Charity	4,995	-
Santander	9,410	-
Pilgrims Trust	2,897	-
Public Health Agency	4,000	-
	399,814	440,229
Investment income		
Bank Interest	238	124
	238	124
Total incoming resources from generating funds	400,052	440,353
Total incoming resources	400,052	440,353

		2013		2012
	£	£	£	£
Charitable activities				
Education and personal development				
Grant funding activities				
Printing, Postage and Stationery	5,865		12,663	
IT Support	6,484		10,696	
Wages and Salaries	202,923		207,020	
Rent, Rates and room hire	25,561		29,592	
Project Delivery Costs	-		3,699	
Light and heat	7,363		10,855	
Repairs and maintenance	5,319		7,035	
Crèche equipment	3,033		8,112	
Insurance and bus insurance	2,878		2,924	
Staff travel and subsistence	4,873		4,913	
Staff training and recruitment	2,001		2,804	
Motor tax and maintenance	2,435		2,483	
Course expenses and tutor fees	56,564		68,470	
Legal and professional fees	1,305		-	
Accrediation	-		500	
Emergency Assistance	140		2,712	
Subscriptions	424		446	
Health and Safety	992		933	
Telephone and fax	4,856		6,143	
Marketing, advertising and seminars	2,281		2,985	
Depreciation	9,027		9,856	
Childcare and travel	<u>371</u>		<u>917</u>	
		<u>344,695</u>		395, 758
Education and personal development total expenditure		<u>344.695</u>		395, 758
Total charitable activity expenditure		<u>344,695</u>		395, 758

	2013 £	2012 £
Goverance Costs Activities undertaken directly		~
Audit fees Salaries Sundry and cleaning expenses Bank charges and Interest	2,328 33,662 1,626 544	2,220 32,723 1,909 893
Total Goverance costs	38,160	37,745
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources for the year	<u>17,197</u>	<u>6,850</u>









European European Social Fund Northern Ireland people: skills: jobs:



LOTTERY FUNDED











