



Annual
Report

2012

Waterford Women's Centre

national collective of
**community based
women's
networks**



Contents

Chairwoman's Address.....	3
Background	4
Current work.....	5
Staff profile 2011	5
Goal 1 Outreach, engagement and progression	6
Impacts.....	7
Goal 2 Progression programme	8
Outputs & Impacts:.....	9
Childcare Centre.....	10
Impacts and outputs	11
Goal 3 Community Facilitators Programme.....	12
Outcomes & Impacts.....	12
Equality for Women Measure, Community	12
Outputs and impacts.....	15
Goal 4 Policy engagement	15
Awareness raising 16 Days of Action:.....	15
International Women's Day March 8th	16
Adult Learners Festival.....	16
Management Committee.....	17
Regional & National Representation	17
Networking.....	18
Outputs and impacts.....	18

Chairwoman's Address

Welcome to the Waterford Women's Centre 2012 Annual Report. This is my first year serving as chairwoman for the Women's Centre. The past year has as always been an eventful year for the management and staff of the Project. The management has had to face significant funding challenges due to Government cut backs and the impacts of the economic recession; this is at a time when women need the service more than ever. However the Women's Centre has been, and continues to be, instrumental in maintaining and developing the national structure to support women's community development while continuing to maintain and support the increase in the numbers of women seeking services and supports at local level. The development of the Regional NCCWN - Women's Collective South East has been a significant and hugely positive development in 2012 and has provided new opportunities for women who experience disadvantage in terms of bringing local issues to national policy level.

The management are very grateful to all the staff, particularly our Coordinator, Breda Murphy, for continuing to ensure the smooth running and the facilitation of the ever increasing numbers of women using the Centre. The women's groups have continued to grow and each woman has demonstrated her commitment to the organisation by continuing to participate fully and overcome barriers. All the groups and, in particular, the early engagement group have expanded greatly this year.

The Childcare Centre has continued to flourish and we would like to thank Coordinator Sarah Walsh and all the childcare staff for their professional work ethic. Furthermore, the management are grateful for the valuable work in overseeing the facilities that contribute greatly to the child friendly ethos of the service. The management would like to thank the parents who are encouraged to engage with the Childcare Centre to ensure best care for their children. The staff team

demonstrate their commitment and have been instrumental in making the facility such a vibrant and welcoming place for children and parents.

As chairwoman, I would like to express my gratitude to our main funder – the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government whose core funding allows us to be sustainable and plan for our future. I would also like to thank all our funding agencies, the Department of Social Protection, the Equality for Women Measure (EWM), Waterford City VEC, The National Childcare Investment Programme and the HSE. Also thanks to those who are involved in, and support, the work we do: advisors; community and statutory agencies; volunteers; participants and staff for their continued support for the Women's Centre. I look forward to us continuing to work together in 2013. **Ann Fitzgerald Chairwoman December 2012**

Background

Waterford Women's Centre (Access 2000 Ltd) was established by women for women and has since 1995 worked with women experiencing social, economic, educational and cultural barriers. Our work has a gender equality, anti-poverty, and social inclusion focus and we work at many levels to analyse and remove barriers to participation for women. We provide a space for the voices of those excluded to be heard and build capacity in order to create and participate in a more equal society. The Women's Centre is situated in Manor Street a busy thoroughfare close to the centre of Waterford city and occupies three terraced houses from 74 -76. It also has a 25 place purpose built Childcare Centre. The Women's Centre provides community development responses to the identified needs of marginalised women, through outreach and engagement, using human rights based approach and community education/community development principles, practices and methodologies. The Women's Centre has always had a strong group of volunteers directing, managing and steering the work.

The Women's Centre has been designing and delivering needs based community education programmes for women since 1995. There is a common approach and ethos that characterises all of the training which has been developed from our experience and understanding of gender inequality, social exclusion and the barriers to participation that disadvantaged women face in society. All our work

focuses on the challenging and removal of these barriers. The women we work with encompass many target groups and include women who are: without formal education qualifications, short term unemployed, long term unemployed, lone parents, Travellers, older women, asylum seekers, refugees, members of low income families and members of new communities.

Current work

- Outreach and support to women who face barriers to participation
- Information and referral
- Drop in facility two mornings a week
- A space where women's groups are facilitated and supported on a daily basis
- Community Education programmes from pre-development to degree
- Support and advocacy for women to access relevant information and services
- Engaging with the FETAC validation process, FBS systems of accreditation and submitting modules for programme validation
- On-going needs based training and support for volunteers and management members
- Engagement in policy analysis with regard to issues and structures that impact on women's lives
- Highlighting issues relating to women's equality
- Childcare provision for up to 25 children to support women's participation
- Community Facilitators Apprenticeship Programme
- Issue based support groups for women
- Domestic Abuse Support Service for women

Staff profile 2011

Childcare Coordinator:

Sarah Walsh

Assistant Coordinator:

Amie O'Shea

Childcare Workers:

Amy Fanning, Laura Marshall, Emma Malone, Michelle Flynn, Cathy Shanahan, Debbie Power. The work was also supported by the following students in 2012, Jamie Roche, Daryl Keirns, Cristina Teague, Kim Murphy, Sarah Langford and Sarah Dwane.

Project Coordinator: Breda Murphy

Administrator: Francesca Jordan

Outreach Development Worker: Kate Crotty

Equality for Women Measure Coordinator: Eleanor Dalton

Facilitators: Alison Langford, Joanne Corcoran, Helen Long, Ann Fitzgerald, Maeve O'Grady and Cathy Hayden.

Goal 1 Outreach, engagement and progression

Through the outreach and early engagement programme we work closely with all relevant local, statutory and community organisations in order to ensure appropriate referrals are made both to the Women's Centre and onto other agencies. Many participants come to the Centre also by hearing about it from women who are already attending. All participants meet with, on a one to one basis, the development worker prior to attending a group in order to assess accurately support needs and ensure the programme is relevant to the women's needs. The early engagement programme is facilitated on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings. In addition to these two mornings an option to attend a craft workshop and a wellbeing programme is also offered. Many of the women who had not engaged in group work before they attended the drop-in found it a very encouraging and relaxed introduction to being in a group.

Forty seven women in total attended the early engagement programme for up to four morning each week during 2012. This work was made possible by funding from the Department of Social Protection from January 2012 to June 2012 and from June to December the Women's Centre facilitators, Ann Fitzgerald, Alison Langford and Helen Long worked with the group on a voluntary basis. This work is directly developed by our Outreach/Development Worker, Kate Crotty and overseen by the Project Coordinator, Breda Murphy through the LCDP funding from the National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks.

Participant feedback

Outcomes

“When I first started to come to the Waterford Women’s Centre, I was afraid to speak or give my opinion as I had been conditioned to believe that I had nothing of interest to say and nobody cared about my opinion”.

“Since coming to the Women’s Centre and through the personal development work that I have done here I have grown as a person and have more belief in myself and my decisions”.

“I have gained confidence and pride in myself thanks to the groupwork we do at the centre”

“The Centre has been a lifeline for me, I felt very alone until I joined the Women’s Centre”

“I have a reason to get up in the mornings, and people care when I don’t turn up, I belong”

“I felt alone until I joined the Women’s Centre I was able to talk freely to other women and wasn’t judged.”

“The women centre has helped me become the woman I would like to have as a friend, I am proud of me today”

“Before I joined the women’s centre I was very depressed, I have learned a lot of new skills that I never thought I could do, the centre is a lifeline for me”

“I was in an abusive relationship and was left broken, I felt stupid, no good, worthless. In short this place saved me”.

In 2012, referrals to the Drop-in were received from local Doctors, Community Welfare, Department of Social Protection, Barnardos, MABS, Local Social Workers, Mental Health Social Workers, Probations Services, Oasis House Women’s Refuge, St. Brigid’s Family Resource Centre, Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre, Waterford City VEC, Tintean Housing for Homeless Women, Simon, Respond Housing, Focus Ireland and Community Drugs worker.

Impacts

47 women were interviewed one to one

15 women referred to other services

45 women attended the drop in

throughout the year

96 early engagement sessions were facilitated

17 meetings took place with statutory and community representatives

27 accessed information and services outside

Goal 2 Progression programme

The progression programme from the early engagement drop-in is called 'Time For Me' women's group. This programme offers more structured learning and participants are required to commit to attending all the learning sessions. Although accreditation is offered it is optional for the participants. In 2012 we were engaged in validating FETAC level 4 components certificates in order to build towards a major award. In 2012 thirteen women took part in FETAC level 4 Personal and Interpersonal skills, while other modules were being validated. In the 'Time For Me' group many women have experienced accreditation for the first time and the creative learning methods used helped dispel the fear around learning. The focus is on collective learning in groups using methods such as small group work, role play, teamwork exercises, and improvisation. Practical exercises using a 'learning by doing' methodology proved particularly enjoyable and worthwhile.

Completing the evidence for accreditation provided an opportunity for the group to become more familiar with portfolio building, project work, and reflective learning journals. A Ceremony for the presentation of FETAC certificates was held and the participants invited members of their family and friends to help them celebrate their achievements.

From January to June 2012 the Department of Social Protection supported the 'Time For Me' women's group. From September to December the group was supported by the development worker and volunteer facilitators.

In 2012 the participants of the Women's Centre organised a number of fundraising events in an effort to compensate for the cuts to core funding. Skills were developed through engaging in a community enterprise initiative

which involved developing a second hand shop. The group gained experience in organising stock, marketing, online marketing, managing money and developing transparent systems of accountability and policies. Meetings were held, committees organised, work divided fairly, conflicts negotiated and resolved, and this initiative presented many opportunities for learning. The shop initiative also provided opportunity to practice in a practical way the Personal and Interpersonal skills being developed on the accredited module. Also the shop initiative was useful towards developing skills which are useful for the retail trade, by providing work practice.

Women in this group also availed of craft workshop and wellbeing sessions.

Outputs & Impacts:

- **12 women achieved Level 4 FETAC accreditation**
- **15 women visited other community groups**
- **42 women attended adult learners event, and cultural awareness events**
- **30 attended workshops on women's health**
- **50 People attended FETAC presentation ceremony**
- **40 accessed information and services, cultural, leisure, library, etc**
- **Improved confidence and self-esteem**
- **Increased personal awareness and personal development**
- **Enhanced communication skills & assertiveness skills**
- **Improved interpersonal relationships with other members in the group and family members**
- **Increased social awareness**
- **Increased involvement in own community**
- **Improved mental and physical health**
- **Increased physical activity, reduction in stress related illness, greater physical, emotional and mental wellbeing**
- **Improved quality of life; interaction with friends, neighbours, community, the process of forming friendships**
- **Development of skills to support increased access to education opportunities.**
- **Raised confidence to enable participation in cultural and recreational activities**
- **Increased presentational skills**
- **Increased development of practical skills**
- **Increased confidence in physical movement ability**

Childcare Centre

In 2012 the Childcare Centre cared for approximately 80 children in total across 50 families, 70% being one parent families headed by mothers. 10% of the parents were supported by the CETS programme, which supports parents to return to education and training in FAS and the VEC through the provision of childcare costs, 10% were supported by ECCE, which offers one year free preschool for every child between the age of 3 and 4 years and seven months. The remaining 80% were supported under childcare subvention. 15% of the parents attended programmes in the Women's Centre, 20% gained employment, and 25% attended English classes and other supports for women from new communities and 40% of the parents attended back to education programmes in second and third level.

Three childcare workers are funded through FAS Community Employment which is a great asset to the service. During the summer of 2012 we continued to provide full day care. This was due to the identified need of the parents using the service. We did however continue to use the outdoor play area together with the park in Railway Square and the People Park. We also visited our local library whenever the weather permitted. Our yearly summer outing to copper coast farm was a great day out for all the children and staff.

We provided healthy and nutritious snacks for the children using the service which was funded under HSE section 39 grants. This initiative has shown to be of great benefit to the children and parents using the service, and the positive benefits are evident in the feedback from children, parents and staff. The childcare service continues to work closely with the Women's Centre and together we work to support women to access training, education, information, services and employment. Throughout the year we offer a large variety of educational and fun activities to stimulate the all over development of the child.

We welcomed feedback from both parents and children as it helps us to develop and enhance the service



'I love coming to crèche to play with all my friends'
Alexandra
aged 4

Feedback from a parent

'My daughter has been attending the women's centre childcare service since summer 2010 and I love having my daughter here as she feels it is her second home. The staff are so helpful and friendly and I am so happy I selected this service.'



Impacts and outputs

80 children attended our service in 2012

50 families supported to access support, training, education and employment, with

35 of the families are headed by mothers parenting alone

15 women were supported to attend Women's Centre groups

15 progressed to employment

20 women from new communities accessed supports, eg English classes

15 accessed back to education programmes, in FAS, VEC, WIT etc.

Goal 3 Community Facilitators Programme

The facilitators at the Women's Centre are women who have progressed through the programmes in the Centre themselves. Many starting in the 'Time For Me' group and progressing to the third level community leaders course, BA in Community Education and Development. In addition they also completed an intensive practical facilitation skills programme during which they served a yearlong apprenticeship with experienced facilitators.

Outcomes & Impacts

- **4 engaged in continuous professional/personal development training in the Women's Centre.**
- **4 took part in training on marking and assessment**
- **1 attended suicide prevention training**
- **3 attended culture and diversity training**
- **4 attended reflective practice training sessions**
- **An increased ability to work effectively with groups and individuals through forming and sustaining relationships and managing professional boundaries thus increasing work readiness**
- **Enhanced ability to manage time effectively and to contribute as a reliable team member**
- **Development of an ability to identify good practice and begin to identify factors which may inhibit good practice**

Equality for Women Measure, Community

In 2012 we continued the learning from 2011 and 11 women community leaders and activists achieved a full Level 7 Degree in Community Education and Development. This is a particularly significant achievement as women participating on this programme had previous negative experience of education. Consequently this programme included a high level of supports in order to overcome barriers and create the conditions under which it would be possible to participate.

Women participating on the programme were involved in a wide range of community practice through the work experience element of the programme. Through ongoing evaluation we are aware that the learning from the programme has had a hugely beneficial impact on their practice. The community practice included the following projects: Carrick-on-Suir CDP, Kilsheelan CP, Waterford Educate Together, Sacred Heart Family Resource Centre, National Collective of Community -based Women's Networks, Cuan Saor Women's Refuge, Waterford Youth Arts, Dungarvan Traveller Women's Project and Waterford Women's Centre. Practice placement mentors have

also reported that the learning from the EWM programme has been extremely beneficial to the projects themselves.

Extracts from testimonials from some of the participants clearly document the positive impact, personally and professionally.

"As a working class woman who left school early, I have had greater opportunities and possibilities opened up to me as a direct result of this EWM programme and of my involvement with Waterford Women's Centre in particular. I left school at 15 and would not have contemplated taking on this learning without all the supports that are available to me within the Centre. The learning happens in a way that is very real, meaningful and collective. I feel I am learning far more than I would I if were an individual learner in mainstream programme. The learning on this programme has helped me to recognize that my years of volunteering in my community were very worthwhile and valid. It has also given me the confidence to participate in policy and decision making at national level which has led to employment as coordinator of a national community women's networking organisation. This organization is responsible for implementing the women's sector local and community development programme throughout the country. I would not have been considered for this work if I had not been participating in this programme and working towards a degree in Community Education and Development".

(Miriam Holt)

"My journey has taken me from being a group participant with no confidence and with no formal education since the age of 14. As a result of this educational opportunity I am now working as a facilitator with groups of women in the community. I never thought years ago that I had the ability to learn at an academic level. I know it is the provision of a safe space where I am listened to supported and encouraged, which gives me the freedom to progress and learn at my own pace. Through the provision of a range of supports with coursework and building my confidence many of the barriers in my life have been supported and addressed. I now recognise and experience how 3rd level education is made accessible by very creative informal methods that have enabled me to learn. Through this educational journey my social analysis awareness in relation to equality and how the effects of marginalisation and oppression influences people's behaviour in society has taken me from the local to the global. I am now involved with working at both grassroots level and also at policy level".

(Ann Fitzgerald)

.....
"At least once a day I think about the fact that I have been given the opportunity to participate in further education, at a time in my life when I thought it would never happen. The benefit to me of the learning to date on a professional level is already

evident in my practice, and on a personal level it has given me so much more confidence. I'm now in my 50's , with all the life experiences of working and raising a family and educating them all to third level, its liberating for me to now be back doing something for my own personal & professional life. I would never have been in a financial position to do a degree without the support of the funding from the EWM programme".

(Dee Jacques)

The following training and supports were delivered as part of the EWM extension programme:

- **Summer workshops:** 'Make Your Experience Count' – skills identification and transferability - portfolio building and extended CV preparation. 6 weekly sessions July – August 2012. This summer programme also served to identify themes for the following workshops.
- **Themed Participatory Learning Workshops:** exploring the field of community work – community education and development - employment trends and prospects – opportunities and threats that exist within society for community participation. Weekly workshops between September and November 2012
- **One-to-one work practice placement supervision** – ongoing throughout the programme.
- **One-to-one learning support mentoring** - ongoing throughout the programme based on need.
- **One-to-one job seeking skills/mentoring** – targeted CV preparation and interview skills – took place on a weekly basis throughout the month of November.
- **A resource space** was set up for all participants and facilitators to facilitate open access to ICT, telephone, materials, books, information, photocopying and meeting space.

Outputs and impacts

32 women received information about the programme

28 women participated

6 women progressed onto further training and education

Goal 4 Policy engagement

Through democratic systems, which have developed through 17 years of review and evaluation, we ensure that all involved in the project have the capacity to have their voices heard and share in the decision making process. There is a mix of those in the project since 1995 and current participants represented on the management committee. The structure and culture of the organisation seeks to ensure that equality and empowerment are at its heart.

Participation on the management committee is recognised as an effective training ground where the capacity of women experiencing disadvantage is built enabling them to voice concerns and develop confidence to participate at a local, regional and national level. The Women's Centre is represented by voluntary management members at a local, regional and national level. The Women's Centre also feeds into national policy development on grassroots women through representation on the NCCWN Board.

Awareness raising 16 Days of Action:

The Women's Centre in partnership with the Local Area Network on Violence against Women aims to improve the services for women in Waterford through working collaboratively and to raise awareness of the issue. To mark the 16 Days of Action (2012) highlighting the issue of violence against women, key statutory and non-statutory agencies in Waterford organised an event in the Waterford City Library, Ladylane on the 5th December 2012. An advertising campaign on WLRFM, entitled "We're ready to listen even if you're not ready to

speak", was also organised locally by Waterford LAN in co-operation with Women's Aid, Dublin.

Cassie Moore author of "Did You Hear Me Crying" a powerful, true tale of survival, spoke at the event and music was provided by the Tramore Gospel Singers.

Waterford Local Area Network (LAN) is a network made up of statutory, community and voluntary groups that provide services to women who are or have experienced domestic abuse. The LAN aims to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women, improve communication between service providers and to help women access those services.

The event was part of the global **16 Days of Action** opposing violence against women and marked the 19th Year of the campaign.

International Women's Day March 8th

The Women's Centre annually organises a public event to mark International Women's Day. In 2012 we marked International Women's Day with a photography exhibition and walk around Waterford city highlighting the contributions made by women in Waterford to civil society. Photographer Annie Brophy and actress Anna Manahan were among those celebrated on the day. We also had an open day at which the national campaign 'Turn off the Red Light' was highlighted.



Gathering outside the Women's Centre on International Women's Day, March 8th 2012, before leaving for a walk through the city highlighting women's contribution to Waterford

Adult Learners Festival

An open day was held as part of the Waterford Adult Learner's Festival. The 'Time For Me' women's group hosted the morning, welcomed

visitors and provided tours of the Centre and Childcare Centre. The morning was rounded off with tea in the newly renovated garden.

Management Committee

Ongoing in-service and external training was availed of during the year and induction training was completed with new staff, voluntary members and students. The employment working group met regularly to oversee and address employment issues and to update and ensure best practice and compliance. All contracts were updated. Staff support and supervision was conducted on a regular basis with all staff members and annual appraisals took place.

All issues of compliance were completed including the annual audit and AGM took place on the 13th June 2012, the annual return lodged with the Company Registrations Office, tax clearance kept up to date and the implementation of new statutory employment policies completed.

Regional & National Representation

In June 2012, Ann Fitzgerald was formally elected as Chairwoman of the Women's Centre. Ann also continued to represent the Women's Collective South East on the Board of the NCCWN. Miriam Holt, director of the Women's Centre, is also a director of the National Women's Council.



A group from the Women's Centre networking in Access Wexford November 2012

The South East Regional NCCWN continued to grow and develop in 2012. We attended and hosted a number of networking meetings

and organised two project visits, one to Wexford and hosted one in Waterford from Access Wexford.

Three NCCWN staff and one voluntary member attended and participated in the NCCWN AGM and national networking meeting in Dublin. At this event we jointly with Access Wexford gave a presentation on the development of the regional forum. The Centre was the lead project in the South East region to support the development of the regional NCCWN forum.

Networking

Networking took place with the following relevant statutory and community organisations throughout the year: Barnardos, CIS, CURA, Dept. of Social Protection, FAS, Focus Ireland, HSE Community Services, Local Social Workers & Doctors, MABS, MEND Programme, Oasis House Women's Refuge, Probation Services, Respond, SIMON, St. Brigid's and the Sacred Heart Family Resource Centres, Tintean Housing for Homeless Women, TREO, Waterford Garda Station, WIT, Waterford City VEC, Waterford Area Partnership, Waterford Youth Arts and Waterford Traveller CDP.

Outputs and impacts

- **80 attended International Women's Day**
- **100 attended 16 Days of Action on Violence Against Women organised in partnership with the LAN**
- **4 attended NCCWN national network event**
- **10 interagency/networking events locally attended**
- **30 took part in the Adult Learning Festival open day**
- **40 attended two regional project visits**
- **20 visited Áras an Uachtaráin and Dáil Éireann**



Transforming Ireland

The NCIP 2006-2010 is funded by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan 2007-2013

The EOCP 2000-2006 is funded by the Irish Government and part-financed by the European Union Structural Funds under the National Development Plan 2000-2006



Funded by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan, 2007 – 2013 (NDP) from funds made available by the National Lottery