



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



NCCWN Waterford Women's Centre (ACCESS 2000 Limited)
removing barriers for women in Waterford since 1995

2017 Annual Report



Christmas breakfast 2017 Lead Into Employment & Health & Wellbeing Groups

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Chairwoman's Address by Alison Langford

I am pleased to introduce the Waterford Women's Centre 2017 Annual Report. The Women's Centre has remained committed to removing barriers and maintaining an independent space for women in Waterford since 1995.

As always the management committee wishes to thank the staff for their commitment to the work without whom we could not continue to provide the supports and services for women and children in Waterford.

I wish to acknowledge the commitment and invaluable work of staff, voluntary and paid; childcare, core administration, outreach and coordination, facilitators, CE and Tus workers.

I would like to express my gratitude to our funders: the NCCWN (National Collective of Community Women's Networks) in providing core staff funding through the Department of Justice & Equality National Women's Equality & Development Programme, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Social Protection Activation & Family Support Programme, Waterford Wexford Education & Training Board, HSE Lotto Funding, Waterford Area Partnership SICAP Social Enterprise Grant and Waterford Council Communities Facilities Scheme.

I wish to thank management members, staff and their families and women attending programmes, for their voluntary donation weekly to the women's centre. We are also most grateful for the annual donation from the Waterford Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity.

Finally thanks to everyone who support the work of the Women's Centre; the voluntary board of management, advisors, women's groups, volunteers, local community projects and statutory agencies, all contributions are most appreciated.

Alison Langford Chairwoman 2017

About the Women's Centre

Breda Murphy: Project Coordinator

Waterford Women's Centre (ACCESS 2000 Company Limited by Guarantee) established in 1995, has provided an independent space for women in Waterford for the past 22 years. The Centre is managed by a committed voluntary board of management, some involved in the Women's Centre since it began and others who have come through programmes in the Centre.

Management Committee

Directors: Helen Rafferty, Eleanor Murphy (Treasurer) and Alison Langford (Chairwoman)

Members: Maeve O'Grady, Ann Fitzgerald and Miriam Holt. **Company Secretary:** Breda Murphy



Maeve O'Grady, Eleanor Murphy, Alison Langford and Ann Fitzgerald, Management/Advisory Members

Staff Team

Childcare Centre Coordinator: Sarah Walsh

Assistant Childcare Coordinator: Amie O'Shea-Daniels

Childcare Workers: Amy Fanning, Michelle Flynn, Lorraine Ryan and Stephanie Bible

Tus: Teresa Hoare, Tetyana Nozdrachova and Joan Barry

Community Employment: Fareeda Kelly, Daria Kortas, Jessica Shortall, Serena McGrath, Maria Fitzsimons and Jennifer Dwyer

Students: Kate Murphy and Laura O'Neill

Project Coordinator: Breda Murphy

Administrator: Francesca Jordan

Outreach Development Coordinator: Kate Crotty

Local Training Initiative Coordinator: Maureen Tobin

MEND Partner Support Worker/DASS Support: Veronica Malone

A panel of facilitators also support the work



Teambuilding Day July 2017

National Collective of Community Based Women's Network

In 2011 staff funding for 17 women's project across the country was redirected through the NCCWN (National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks). The NCCWN Waterford Women's Centre became part of this national women's programme to collectively provide needs based supports and services for women throughout the country. The national coordinators office is based in the Waterford Women's Centre.

Vision

Recognising the impact of class & gender conditioning and the way cultural, political and economic structures impact on our lives the Women's Centre aims to provide a safe space where women can overcome barriers and collectively challenge structures that block our development.

From the personal to the political – our values

As part of a National Women's Programme the Women's Centre, along with 16 NCCWN Projects, recognises the potential and strength of working collectively to influence policy at a national level. In providing a space locally for women to participate in community education, build confidence, express opinions, learn skills, the Women's Centres across the country build capacity so that voices not usually heard can be.

Childcare

The Women's Centre Childcare Service provides care for up to 50 children daily in its purpose built Centre. The Women's Centre acknowledges the key role, for many their primary role, women play in society as carers. In order to provide equality of condition in accessing programmes, supports & services for women, the provision of childcare is essential. Our Childcare Services in keeping with the ethos of the Women's Centre keeps children's needs central. We recognise the invaluable work our childcare workers do, often undervalued and underpaid, as is women's role as carers in society. The Women's Centre is committed to ensuring that the role of mother and childcare worker is recognised as one of the key roles in society and not one that should go undervalued, underpaid or unpaid.

Outreach

Outreach strategies have developed from engaging with women experiencing disadvantage and by reviewing what worked and what did not in Waterford since 1995. This strategy helps to engage women who would otherwise not be reached. We have strong referral relationships with all relevant community and statutory agencies in Waterford, ensuring we reach those who most need our programmes and appropriate referrals are made in both directions.

The ongoing work of maintaining and building relationships and working closely with local services and networks is key to reaching the most disadvantaged women. Existing participants are themselves our greatest advocates and key outreach workers both in their families and local communities, knowing first-hand what the Women's Centre offers and the impact their participation has had on their lives and that of their children, extended families and often their communities.

One to one interviews take place with each woman prior to engagement thus ensuring the most appropriate placement whether within the Women's Centre's Programmes or on to another service. Additional supports needs are identified at entry and relevant referrals made. These referrals continued throughout the year as required. When participating in programmes trust is build and it is then women often look for supports for issues they have lived with for many years and have remained barriers to their progression.

The Waterford Women's Centre is the only Women's Centre in Waterford and we provide a first point of reference for women to access relevant supports and services to remove barriers to their participation. Women are facilitated to participate in a course and to access relevant supports. In addition they are supported to participate in community events and to access public spaces they otherwise would not access such as; local library, museums, art galleries, local festivals and exhibitions. The impact of disadvantage and oppression can result in feeling public spaces are not meant for them. Through understanding gender/class oppression the Women's Centre support and challenge limits that blocks participation and encourage access in all areas of society.

The Centre has over the past 22 years discovered that many women because of experiences in families, communities, education or social situations lost confidence in their ability to contribute to society or to their own lives and as a result do not chose to participate. Therefore in encouraging women to participate the Women's Centre employs a number of strategies which have evolved over the years from recognising what works. We work closely with all the key local agencies so that women who could benefit from our service can access it. In designing and delivering needs-based community education programmes with women since 1995, the Centre focuses on removing barriers. Barriers can be of the internal sort; 'I am not able....good enough....smart enough.....' or external barriers; no transport, literacy issues, no money to pay for courses or no childcare. In working through barriers on an individual basis and through keeping programmes needs based individual barriers are removed making way for collective learning and support to take place.

The work:

- Outreach and engagement
- Design and delivery of Community Education programmes
- Support access additional relevant information and services
- Provide on-going needs-based training and support for volunteers and management
- Maintain and develop a democratic organisational structure with equality at its heart
- Engage in policy analysis and highlight issues that impact on women's lives
- Provide care for up to 50 children to support women's participation
- Issue-based support groups for women
- Provide a first step Domestic Abuse Support Service (DASS)
- Network with relevant local agencies to support ease of access to relevant supports, information and services for women
- Facilitate local agencies working with women experiencing domestic abuse to network and raise awareness of the issue
- Raise the profile of women in Waterford through the Women's History Project
- Network and work collaboratively with the other 16 NCCWN Women's Projects at a regional and national level
- Social Enterprise development

Childcare Centre by Sarah Walsh



The Women's Centre Childcare Service can accommodate 50 children from 15 months to 6 years. We are open from 8.45am – 5.15 pm Monday to Friday. Our small numbers support children, parents and staff to get to know each other, thus building strong relationships.

This purpose build Centre is a fun bright place to introduce your children to when they are ready to start Play School or when you need full or part time childcare support.

Telephone or call in to make an appointment if you would like to come and see our facility. We would be delighted to show you around and give you the opportunity to meet our staff and to see our well-equipped and spacious indoor and outdoor facilities.

Ethos:

To provide a holistic approach in caring for children, with the involvement of their family. We aim to provide a safe, comfortable and happy environment for children and parents. We have an open door policy which ensures that there is always a staff member available to meet with parents.

Mission Statement:

The Women's Centre Childcare Service is committed to providing an environment that promotes the physical, intellectual, language, emotional, social and spiritual development of the child.

**Fees**

Fees are dependent on family income and the following schemes are offered:

E.C.C.E (Early Childhood Care and Education, Free Preschool Year)

C.E.T.S (Childcare Education and Training Support) this is a part paid childcare place for parents attending a further education course..

C.C.C.S (Community Childcare Subvention Scheme) a childcare subsidy scheme through which eligible parents can access childcare places in a community childcare facility at a reduced cost.

About our Staff

All our Childcare Staff are fully qualified and carefully selected in order to provide a caring and professional service. We would love to welcome your family to our Centre. Our goal is to provide the best possible care for your child.

We believe children learn mainly through play and from interactions with their peers. We therefore promote a social atmosphere which encourages the development of friendships. Children are encouraged to express themselves, to work /play together and to celebrate difference.

The curriculum offered is varied, stimulating and flexible and allows all ages to learn at their own pace. We believe learning should be fun and this is evident in all activities. We follow Siolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.

We provide:

A safe environment where children can learn through playing. We have dedicated sleep rooms with flexible sleep routines based on the child's needs.

Our daily activities are designed to encourage creativity and development. All activities are age appropriate and include: painting, messy play, sand and water, music, singing, dancing, action, story time and dress up.

We aim to provide a safe and welcoming environment for children, where the child is always central. We promote and encourage a social atmosphere supporting the development of friendships and social skills. Our play-based programme offers children the opportunities to develop a wide variety of skills through a range of play options. The Childcare Centre continues to work hand-in-hand with the Women's Centre to support women remove barriers to accessing training, education, information, services and employment. Childcare is still one of the biggest barriers faced by women as they attempt to move forward and progress.

In removing barriers to participation for women the provision of childcare is still key. In 2017 the Women's Centre Childcare Service cared for a total 104 children across 60 families. 70% of families were one parent families headed by women.

15% of parents were supported by the CETS programme which supports the return to education, 70% were supported by ECCE free preschool and the rest supported by childcare subvention.

10% of parents attended programmes in the Women's Centre, 10% attended English classes and other supports for new communities. 60% of parents attended back to education programmes in further education or third level and 20% gained employment. The Childcare Service also provided work placement for 2 Students in 2017.

Community Education Programmes by Kate Crotty



Local programme funding supports women attending the community education programmes not only to participate but also to benefit from mentoring, advocacy and additional relevant supports.

139 women were supported from engagement to active participation across programmes throughout 2017.

All our programmes employ community education methodologies; challenging inequality and limited conditioning and promote a feminist approach underpinned by an ethos of equality. Personal development together with social analysis builds capacity to identify and address not only personal issues but also community and social. The Community Education programmes are funded by the Department of Social Protection and the Waterford Wexford Education and Training Board.

Health & Wellbeing

This programme aims to provide a springboard to health and wellbeing through the delivery of a varied programme from unlearning negative patterns to identifying goals to positive change and forming new habits for health. In 2017 a total of 52 women attended a 36 week programme for two days each week.

Health & Wellbeing participants identified an increased sense of belief in themselves from being listened to. All our community education programme provides opportunities for participants to find their voice and share opinions which has been named by the participants as empowering. Participants learned how to reduce daily stress levels through coping strategies. Confidence increased as did communication skills and the ability to articulate their needs and name their world.

Outcomes:

- Increased confidence
- Better able to deal with stress and employ learned strategies to reduce stress
- Communicate more assertively and have the ability to recognise the benefits of positive communication
- Increased personal awareness and reflection skills
- Introduction to conflict resolution skills
- The development of groupwork skills
- Make friends
- Enhanced development of life skills
- Improved understanding of the importance of budgeting and ability to evaluate relationship with money
- An increased understanding of culture and diversity
- Enhanced understanding of the importance of self-care
- Increased knowledge of the factors that contribute to or inhibit health and wellbeing

In our own words.....

"Being here is the most positive thing I have done for myself in a long time. I am encouraged to speak if I am finding anything difficult and support is given where needed. The support is phenomenal."

"I got help with my anxiety and wellbeing, I have a reason to get out of bed and motivate myself"

"I am very happy when I come in here, and the connection with each other is very good"

"I found this group very helpful. I felt very welcome. I got plenty of support and I am now getting help with reading and writing in another school as well coming here and getting confidence".

Lead Into Employment



The **'Lead In to Employment'** programme aims to support women to identify and remove barriers that block them in engaging in education, training or employment. 37 women attended this programme in 2017 for 36 weeks three days each week. One programme completed in June 2017 and another began in September and is ongoing until June 2018

Progression from the completed programme included; full time employment, further education, community employment, Tus, QQI courses level 4 to 6 and third level.

For many participants the course facilitated a change of thinking in terms of what needs to happen in order to progress. Through developing the tools to reflect on their actions participants have suggested that they have developed the ability to change the way they deal with issues that come up for them. Many suggest that they would never have accessed other services and supports without this intervention.

In our own words: *"This is the first time I got real help even with things going on at home, I never told anyone about what I struggle with before, I usually just drop out, I can't believe I finished the course"*

"I feel I would never have got on my VTOS course only I had practiced interviews here"

"I never had anyone to believe in me before, and over this year I started to believe in myself and I even made friends"

"In never had an interview before so I'm so glad we did those interview role plays as it didn't occur to me that body language also matters. I must have done well as I'm starting work next week".

Outcomes:

- Increased confidence & self-esteem
- Increased belief in self and own ability

- Enhanced ability to communicate more positively
- More positive about the future
- Clear goal setting and progression plans
- Increased personal awareness/development
- Assertiveness skills
- Study skills
- Increased literacy skills
- Greater understanding of culture, diversity and social analysis

Women's History Bonnet Project



This project links into **'Roses from the Heart'** international project, a memorial to the 25,566 women sentenced to transportation as convicts from the then British Isles to Australia and Tasmania (formerly named Van Diemen's Land) between 1788 & 1853. Some of those women and children were from Waterford. The artist, Christina Henri chose a cloth bonnet, taken from an original 1860s servant's bonnet, to symbolise the lives of these convict women whose stories were forgotten. Christina believes that many of these impoverished women were transported simply for being vagrants and when given opportunities in Tasmania or Australia the women's resilience and fortitude saw them flourish and contribute to the growth of the emerging nation.



The named bonnets made by the Women's Centre group will be on display in the Waterford City Council Library as part of our 2018 International Women's Day exhibition remembering some 15 of the 304 Waterford Women who were transported. The Bonnet Project facilitated the development of practical skills such as: hand and machine sewing, following a pattern, embroidery, design and decoration. Along with these practical skills and in keeping with community education principles it facilitated discussion and analysis on history, gender, class and the individual women whom the bonnets were being made for.

Facilitation Training

Facilitation training is delivered at three levels; introduction, intermediate and advanced and aims to offer a practical introduction to those involved in community organisation either as paid employees or as volunteers. This programme enables the development of practical facilitation skills through a learning by doing process at intermediate level and a more challenging theory to practice at advanced level. 35 participants attended an intermediate and advanced programme one day a week for 20 weeks in 2017. Many of the participants worked in community projects in paid or voluntary capacity or were studying in a related field. Consequently being in a learning group and getting practical experience as well as theoretical knowledge suited the learning styles of all group participants. The participants were from many different organisations.

Feedback from evaluations suggest that it was a very informative and quality experience for participants. Some of the participants had third level qualifications but needed to increase their confidence to work effectively with groups.

In their own words....

"Loved the delivery, the subject matter and also the opportunity to learn from other members of the group...helps to solidify what I am learning and studying in college."

"I found the course very informative & helpful. A great guidance not only in facilitation or community work but in all aspects of life, e.g. family life."

"I had no idea how much was involved in facilitating groups it looks so easy but there is so much going on behind the scenes"

"I have learned so much in this short few weeks and much of what I learned are actually life skills that I can use in my everyday life when communicating with people"

"I realise that I must increase my own personal awareness before I can work effectively with groups, I need a lot more of this type of learning"

"I want to do more of this, collective learning really suits me and I look forward to this every week, I'm learning so much"

"I am going to bring back all this learning to my own organisation and do some more of this training"

Outcomes:

- Personal development
- Strategies to deal with difficult behaviour in groups identified and practiced
- Developed an awareness of social analysis in relation to facilitating groups
- Increased ability to deal with conflict within a group
- Experience in participatory groupwork and giving and receiving constructive criticism
- Experience and evaluation of using games, energisers and community arts methods within groupwork

International Women's Day 2017

In 2017 the Women's Centre participated in a very successful collective event to celebrate International Women's Day's in presenting three historical exhibitions uniquely linked from Waterford to Tasmania on the 4th March in Waterford City Council Library. Three strands of Waterford history come together in one venue to present an incredible story of endurance, resilience and courage and presented a rich and extensive exhibition highlighting Waterford city and county women's stories through photographs and written narrative.

1 "Roses from the Heart" Bonnet exhibition

A very interesting and heart wrenching exhibition highlighting Waterford Women who were tried, convicted and transported to Van Diemen's Land. They worked as servants in free settlers' houses or were sent to one of the five [female factories](#), women's workhouse prisons. 'Roses from the Heart', is a Memorial to the 25,566 women sentenced to transportation as convicts from the then British Isles to Australia and Tasmania (formerly named van Diemen's Land) between 1788 & 1853. Some of those women and children were from Waterford and a cloth bonnet, taken from an original 1860s servant's bonnet, was chosen to symbolise each women convicted and deported and whose lives were forgotten for far too long. Many of these impoverished women were transported simply for being vagrants and when afforded opportunities in Tasmania or Australia they flourished and contributed to the growth of the emerging nation. The named bonnets on display were made and embellished by contemporary women in Waterford remembering **the 304 Waterford Women** from the past.

2 Waterford Women's Centre history exhibition

The Women's Centre exhibition is an extensive body of work which is ongoing and continuously growing. The collection represents Waterford women from all areas of life who made valuable contributions to Waterford Society. Many of the women had been written out of history.



3 Waterford's Thomas Francis Meagher (1823 1867)

A Young Irelander, Irish/American Patriot & originator of our National Tricolour Thomas Francis Meagher was transported to Van Diemen's Land where his baby son is buried and was remembered in this exhibition with a bonnet.

The Women's Centre was part of three historical exhibitions uniquely linked from Waterford to Tasmania to celebrate International Women's Day 2017.

Domestic Abuse & Violence against Women

MEND Partner Support Programme:

Women living with domestic violence can experience low levels of confidence, mental health issues, anxiety etc., all of which act as barriers to their engagement and participation. We work closely with all the relevant agencies in Waterford to ensure seamless referrals for women experiencing domestic violence. We also work in partnership with the Men's Development Network to provide support for the partners of men on the MEND Perpetrators Programme. In 2017 the Partner Support Programme worked with a total of 20 women over approximately 47 weeks for an average of 6 hours each week on one to one support - face to face or telephone calls.

Domestic Abuse Support Service (DASS):

The Women's Centre is in a key position to facilitate this 'first step' Domestic Abuse support. Working closely with all relevant agencies in Waterford, through the Local Area Network Opposing Violence against Women, the Centre acts as a conduit to accessing relevant services by offering a neutral space for women. This service offers a bridge for women dealing with issues of domestic abuse and violence, who need additional support before they access services.

Local Area Network Opposing Violence against Women (LAN):



Local Area Network Committee

The Local Area Network (LAN) coordinated by the Women's Centre is a collective of statutory, community and voluntary groups that provide services to women and children who are or have experienced domestic abuse. The Women's Centre hosts the LAN meetings and plays a pivotal role in its development and is committed to raising awareness, providing seamless services and supports for women and addressing barriers or gaps in local services.

In 2017 the LAN held an information and awareness raising event 'Change the Conversation' in Carrickphierish Library on 5th December. This event was part of the global **16 Days of Action** opposing violence against women which runs annually from 25th November (International Day Opposing Violence Against Women) to the 10th December (International Human Rights Day).

The event was attended by approximately 60 people and aimed to raise awareness of the issue of domestic violence with a particular focus on young people.

Alternative Therapy Sessions

Camilla Clarke, Holistic & Complimentary Therapist provided affordable access to alternative therapy throughout the year.



The Women's History Project by Ann Fitzgerald

From working with women for the past 22 years we are aware of the necessity of including history in our work and in acknowledging the role played by women who came before us and who made this path, this foundation for us to build upon. Without them we would not now be able to do what we do. When we acknowledge this we uncover historical confidence and use it in the present. We believe that when we look back and take pride in the work of ordinary women with whom we can identify, we unlock power in the present as we learn from their successes and failures. The exclusion of women's input, whether written out or never recorded, and valuing the contribution of men as more important contributes to the disempowerment of women in the present. Since 2012 the Women's Centre History Group has engaged in highlighting women's contribution in a number of ways:

1. The **Pink Plaque Campaign** aims to increase the number of Waterford City Civic Trust Blue Plaques dedicated to women and acknowledge their contribution to our City and County. The Women's Centre is committed to supporting one new blue plaque to a Waterford women each year.



2. The ongoing development of **Women in History Photographic Exhibition** recording Waterford women's stories including present day women. Exhibited annually for International Women's Day.
3. The use of history in our community education programmes as a tool for building confidence and empowering women. **The Bonnet Project** above is one such programme.

Appreciations

To all the women who came through our doors in 2017 and to all who contributed in any way to the work - a big thank you.

