



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



**NCCWN Waterford Women's Centre  
(ACCESS 2000 Limited) celebrating 20  
years removing barriers for women**

# 2015 Annual Report

Happy Birthday Women's Centre



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## Welcome to our new Chairwoman Alison Langford

### Chairwoman's Address

As the Chairwoman it gives me great pleasure to introduce the Waterford Women's Centre 2015 Annual Report. Despite facing numerous challenges once again in 2015 the Women's Centre remained committed to removing barriers and maintaining an independent space for women in Waterford.

The management committee wishes to thank all the staff who always give above and beyond the call of duty in every area of the Women's Centre and Childcare Service and continue tirelessly to ensure the smooth running of the Centre.

I wish to acknowledge the invaluable work our childcare workers do in providing quality childcare. Children are placed central at all times and the child-friendly ethos of the service is constantly upheld. I would also like to mention the role of parents, without whom, the work would not be of the quality experienced. When we work in partnership we ensure the best care for children.

As chairwoman, I would like to express my gratitude to our funders – the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government who provide core funding through the NCCWN (National Collective of Community Women's Networks), the National Childcare Investment Programme, the Department of Social Protection, Waterford Wexford Education & Training Board, the HSE, and Solidarity Trust. I wish to thank management members, staff and their families who give a voluntary donation weekly to the women's centre. We are also most grateful for the once off donations in 2015 from Bausch & Lomb, Tesco and Waterford Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to the Women's Centre in 2015; the voluntary board of management, advisors, women's groups, volunteers, local community projects and statutory agencies: all of your contributions are most appreciated.

### **Alison Langford Chairwoman 2015**

## Background

Waterford Women's Centre (Access 2000 Ltd) has since 1995 worked with women to remove social, economic, educational and cultural barriers to participation. With a focus on class and gender, through critical analysis it aims to raise awareness of social inequality to bring about positive change for women.

Recognising the impact of class/gender conditioning and cultural, political and economic structures, the Women's Centre provides;

1. A democratic space where women are facilitated to challenge multiple barriers to their development.
2. A space to collectively challenge structures that impact negatively on women.

By providing a space for women who are normally excluded from many areas, in particular from decision making, the Women's Centre builds capacity so that voices not usually heard can be.

The Women's Centre Childcare Service provides care for up to 35 children daily in its purpose built Centre. The Centre provides community development responses to identified needs through outreach and engagement, using a human rights-based approach and community education/community development principles, practices and methodologies. The Women's Centre has a strong group of volunteers directing, managing and steering the work.

Designing and delivering needs-based community education programmes with women since 1995, the Centre uses a common approach and ethos. This approach characterises all the training which developed in response to the experience and understanding of gender and class inequality. The focus of the work is on challenging and removing barriers to participation.

## Current work

- Outreach and engage women who face barriers to participating in formal programmes
- Design and delivery of Community Education programmes
- Facilitate women to 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 35 children to support women's participation
- Facilitate 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

## Childcare Centre

In 2015 the Childcare Centre cared for approximately 60 children from 40 families. Even though the number of individual children and families using the service decreased since last year, this was for positive reasons in so far as most of the children stayed throughout the school year. 70% of the families were 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 ETB through providing childcare costs; 25% were supported by ECCE, which offers one year free preschool for every child between the age of 3 years and 3 months and 4 years and 7 months. The remaining 65% were supported by childcare subvention; 10% of the parents attended programmes in the Women's Centre; 20% accessed employment; 15% attended English classes and other supports for women from new communities; 25% of the parents attended back to education programmes in further education or third level.

Throughout 2015 the Childcare Centre had a waiting list for up to 8 places for ECCE (Early Childhood Care & Education) Programme which provides a free pre-school for a child between 3 - 5 for one

year. The Centre's current pre-school space only allows for 14 children and requires two staff as per the ratio 1:11. However the current space could not support the number of children approved by the staff ratio. Therefore there is a need to extend the pre-school space to accommodate this waiting list. Plans to expand the existing building are under way and will hopefully be operational in 2016.

Again in 2015 we continued to provide full day care throughout the summer months, as this was the greatest need, instead of providing a summer programme. However we got out as much as the weather allowed and made full use of the wonderful outdoor play area and amenities available free in Waterford. We paid a number visits to the Central Library in Lady Lane, only a short walk from the Women's Centre through the city, in itself part of the adventure. The children thoroughly enjoyed the Library and they were welcomed by the Library Staff to explore and utilise all that is on offer there. We also made full use of the Railway Square Play Ground which is on our doorstep and is loved by the children. With a slightly longer walk, the People's Park Play Ground is a real treat for the older children.

The Childcare Centre continued to work hand-in-hand with the Women's Centre to support women and 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.

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.

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 also utilise the diverse backgrounds of the children attending the Centre as a learning tool by highlighting a variety of relevant festivities throughout the year including: Chinese New Year, St Patrick's Day, Lithuanian National Flag Day, Easter, Christmas, Mother's Day & Father's Day, International Women's Day & Africa Day. Children, staff and parents are involved in preparation and participation at these events. We ensure that these are fun events while providing a learning opportunity for the children.



**Celebrating diversity through displaying the nationalities in the centre with flags and language “We all smile in the same language”**

**– anonymous**



### **Children Learn What They Live**

**by Dorothy Law Nolte**

If children live with criticism  
 They learn to condemn,  
 If children live with hostility,  
 They learn to fight,  
 If children live with ridicule,  
 They learn to be shy,  
 If children live with shame,  
 They learn to feel guilty,

If children live with tolerance,  
 They learn to be patient,  
 If children live with encouragement,  
 They learn to be confident,  
 If children live with praise,  
 They learn to appreciate,  
 If children live with fairness,  
 They learn justice,  
 If children live with security,  
 They learn to trust,  
 If children live with approval,  
 They learn to like themselves,  
 If children live with friendship and acceptance,  
 They learn to find love in the world.



## Childcare Outputs & Impacts

60 children attended our service in 2015

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

25 families headed by mothers parenting alone

5 women supported to attend Women's Centre groups

10 women progressed to employment

10 women from new communities accessed supports, e.g. English classes

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

## Staff Profile

### Childcare Centre

**Coordinator:**

Sarah Walsh

**Assistant Coordinator:**

Amie O'Shea

**Childcare Workers:**

Amy Fanning, Michelle Flynn, Cathie Shanahan, Stephanie Bible, Fiona Power, Lorraine Ryan, Kristine Broka and Corinna Cullen.

**The work was also supported by the following students and volunteer in 2015:** Jane Kelly, Cliona Power, Sarah Kavanagh, Ana Arutcheva & Rachael Lynch.

### Women's Centre

**Coordinator:** Breda Murphy

**Administrator:** Francesca Jordan

**Outreach Development Coordinator:** Kate Crotty

**Facilitators:** Ann Fitzgerald, Kate Crotty, Kate Glavey, Maeve O'Grady, Sarah Murphy, Marie Power, Dee Jacques, Liz Heffernan, Eleanor Dalton, Marie Roche and Kat Cordeaux

**Volunteers:** Laura Crotty, Kate Glavey, Kat Cordeaux, Liz Heffernan, Katarzyna Frey-Kutakowka, Camilla and Debbie Kiely

**Social Enterprise:** Mary Ryan, Karen Glancy, Marie Power and Teresa Harrington

## International Women's Day 2015

### Celebrated with a week-long programme of events

This year the Centre celebrates the 20th anniversary of its establishment in 1995. As part of the birthday celebrations and in celebrating Women's Day, we hosted a numbers of events throughout the week attended by 150 people. Eleanor Murphy presented a talk on the forgotten role Waterford Women played in the first World War and Ann Fitzgerald spoke about three influential women with Waterford links at an event in St. Patrick's Gateway Centre on the Tuesday 10th March.



A week-long exhibition 'Pioneering Waterford Women' was launched by historian Andrew Kelly in Waterford City Library, History Room, on Wednesday 11th March. This exhibition is the product of collaboration between Ann Fitzgerald and Andrew Kelly. It highlights women from all backgrounds who have had a significant impact on Waterford society and who deserve recognition for their work and achievements.

On Thursday morning the 12th March a planned 'Women's Walk' did not take place due to the inclement weather, however a good crowd gathered in the Women's Centre to hear about many women like Annie Brophy, Anna Manahan, Mary Strangman and many more influential women who helped pave the way for women today. It was an opportunity to acknowledge and credit the work of women, often written out or forgotten in history.



These events placed a strong emphasis on recognising women's contribution in Waterford in the past and has resulted in the Women's Centre beginning a 'pink plaque' campaign. This campaign aims to increase women's recognition in Waterford and draws attention to the number of Civic Trust blue plaques dedicated to women as at present there are only three. It is hoped to nominate a woman for a plaque in the near future and to have at least one blue plaque dedicated to women or a woman in time for 2016 International Women's Day. There is a cost involved in securing a blue plaque so we will be looking for financial support for this project

### **Flowers for Magdalenes**

The Women's Centre was delighted to be part of organising the annual Flowers for Magdalenes ceremony, in Waterford on Saturday 28th February at St Mary's Church Ballygunner Cemetery, attended by 20, to honour Magdalene women throughout Ireland.

### **Waterford Diversity Festival**

The Women's Centre was part of the organising committee for the 2015 Waterford Diversity Festival which was launched on the 16th of September and attended by 200 people in St. Patrick's Gateway Centre. Key speakers at the event included: Mayor of Waterford Cllr John Cummins, Minister of State at the Department of Justice & Equality, TD Aodhán O'Riordáin and Amnesty International Executive Director Colm O'Gorman. Performers included: High Hopes & Music in Motion Choirs, Igbo Dance Group and Poet Maty Tamen. 30 attended the Women's Centre's open morning as part of the festival. This was to showcase the work of the Centre and to increase awareness and understanding of diversity and to promote methodologies that support active participation. The Diversity Festival Grand Finale took place on the afternoon of Saturday 19th of September in beautiful sunshine New Street Gardens with entertainment throughout the afternoon.

### **Waterford Healthy Cities Initiative**

The World Health (WHO) initiative involves over 80 cities in Europe. The aim is to enhance the health of the city, its environment and people through all groups and agencies working together. The Women's Centre had an open morning to highlight our contribution to the health & wellbeing of the women of Waterford. The Centre has an ongoing 'Health & Wellbeing' programme which has continuous intake throughout the year. The Mayor Cllr. Lola O'Sullivan visited the centre and representatives of community and statutory organisations attended the open morning. Up to 30 people participated.

## Domestic Abuse & Violence Against Women

### 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. Nine availed of support through DASS in 2015.

### Local Area Network Opposing Violence against Women (LAN):

The Women's Centre hosts the LAN meetings and plays a pivotal role in its development. LAN consists of local statutory and community organisations committed to raising awareness of the issue, providing seamless services and supports for women and addressing barriers or gaps in services. Members acknowledge that their being in the LAN enhances their ability to support women experiencing violence in a more compassionate, time sensitive and holistic manner.

### 16 Days of Action Opposing Violence Against Women - 8th December in Tramore

**Waterford Local Area Network Opposing Violence Against Women (LAN) awareness raising event 'Women's Voices' in Tramore on 8th December 2015**



This event, which was funded by COSC (the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence) was part of the global **16 Days of Action** opposing violence against women. This campaign runs annually from 25th November (International Day Opposing Violence Against Women) to the 10th December (International Human Rights Day).

The event, held in the Coast Guard Station Tramore was attended by approximately 80 people. It aimed to raise awareness and highlight supports & services for women experiencing domestic abuse in County Waterford. The Tramore Gospel Singers led by local musician Jane O'Brien Moran, once again, supported the event with their unique harmonies and sensitive choice of songs.

Local Area Network Chairperson, Heather Kiely, Sacred Heart FRC, welcomed everyone to the event and introduced a short film from Women's Aid, entitled 'Women's Voices'. Women's Aid interviewed survivors of domestic violence and the women's stories were put together in a video which aims to build better understanding of the complexities of domestic violence. Aimed at women who are currently in abusive relationships, the 8-minute long video uses the voices of women who have experienced emotional, physical, financial and sexual abuse. It aims to help women recognise abusive behaviour, know that they are not alone and encourage them to reach out for support.

Clodagh Dowley, Waterford Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre, outlined the services provided by the Centre. She stressed the importance of letting people know that help is available, and that the Centre will help women access additional services also. The Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre provides a counselling service in Dungarvan one day a week which can be accessed through the Waterford City number. Breeda Ryan, Oasis House Women's Refuge, spoke about the additional supports available to the women and children who use the refuge in Waterford City. Breda Murphy, Waterford Women's Centre spoke about the Domestic Abuse Support Service (DASS) available in the Women's Centre by appointment.

### **MEND Partner Support Programme:**

The Women's Centre provides supports for the partners of men attending the MEND Male Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse through the Men's Development Network. This programme provides one to one support, advocacy, information and referrals. 15 women were supported in 2015.

### **Young Women's Support Group - living without limits!**

The Young Women's Support Group was facilitated once a fortnight and was attended by five in 2015. It provides a space for young women to identify the barriers they face, in particular the internal barriers due to gender conditioning. They examine ways to challenge and address these barriers and live their lives without limits. As part of developing this group over the past four years the group was supported to identify and write up best practice on an ongoing basis in order to develop a model of facilitating support groups designed by the members themselves. We recognise the necessity of encouraging and developing the critical voices of young women for the future of the women's projects.

### **The Women's History Project**

This project has been ongoing since 2012 and was started by our then chairwoman Ann Fitzgerald. There are now over 150 Waterford Women profiled as part of the Women's Centre photographic and narrative exhibition. This Women's History Group has grown in numbers as new members become interested in women's history. 'The Pink Plaque' campaign is a spinoff from the History Group and aims to increase the number of Waterford Civic Trust blue plaques dedicated to Women in Waterford City. It is hoped to have the first plaque sponsored by the Women's Centre launched on International Women's Day 2016. This project has captured the public imagination and has the potential to develop a consciousness of past inequalities which, in retrospect, is blatantly obvious and through it, shine a light on the present.

## Community Education Programmes in 2015

### Health & Wellbeing

The Women's Centre facilitated a 'Health & Wellbeing' course in 2015 and worked with approximately 42 women. This course has continuous intake throughout the year. The course facilitates each participant to work collectively. The development of groupwork skills is an integral part of the activities.

The aim of the Health & Wellbeing course is to work in a holistic way with women in order to reduce daily stress and promote self-awareness. This course encourages positive thinking, releases creative energy, and builds group energy and support which increases confidence.

The following are elements of this course:

- Introduction to self-care
- Building group energy and support through developing group work skills
- Promote self-awareness and recognise how we can limit ourselves
- Stress management, recognising the signs of stress and learning coping strategies
- Information discussions on physical and mental health
- Development of effective communication and assertiveness skills
- Motivational discussions to create positive thinking
- Exploring & promoting positive attitude to diversity
- Meditation & relaxation techniques
- Personal Development
- Social Analysis
- Goal setting & providing information on further education and training

The 'Health & Wellbeing' course aims to facilitate an increased sense of wellbeing for each participant which can have a positive impact in their families and community. Through building confidence and self-esteem, participants become more equipped to deal with everyday life situations and many explore further learning or voluntary work.

#### Outcomes identified:

- Increased confidence
- Manage stress better by recognising the signs and implementing coping strategies
- A deeper understanding of physical & mental health issues
- Less visits to the family doctor
- Greater recognition of the importance of self-care
- The development of groupwork skills
- Increased self-awareness
- Greater understanding of the importance of positive communication and assertiveness
- Increased awareness on the importance of healthy eating
- Developed skills in meditation & relaxation techniques to alleviate stress
- Increased personal development
- Developed goal-setting skills

As a result of their participation in the Health & Wellbeing women got involved in other activities:

- 2 participants progressed to the 'Women Exploring Options' access course
- 3 progressed to ETB courses
- 3 women are volunteering in the RSPCA
- 2 attended the literacy service in the Waterford Adult Education Centre
- 3 attended a dance class in the Edmond Rice Centre
- 15 attended an exhibition in the Library
- 9 attended a 'Local Area Network On Violence Against Women' event
- 6 attended a workshop with the Regional Educational Guidance Service for Adults (REGSA)
- 3 regularly attended a health & wellbeing morning in a local hotel leisure centre
- 7 attended reflexology/alternative therapy sessions
- 2 were elected as representatives onto the Women's Centre Management structure
- 3 attended a facilitated women's support group



**Some members of the 'Health & Wellbeing' Group taking a break in the Women's Centre Cafe**

## 'Women Exploring Options' 2015



### Some members of 'Women Exploring Options'

This course provided both theoretical and practical training and education. Each participant gained personal awareness/development, social awareness and academic skills, in preparation for progression to more formal courses. A progression plan was facilitated for each participant through one to one mentoring and group sessions. Outcomes include the following:

- Increased confidence in own ability
- Identification of blocks to progression and how they can impact on life choices
- Consolidation and organization of transferable skills through completing the 'Make Your Experience Count' module
- Developing a portfolio of prior learning
- Enhanced writing ability regarding reflective journals and academic essays
- Curriculum Vitae development and interview preparation
- Increased personal awareness
- Awareness of social analysis through exploring class, gender, power relations and cultural awareness
- Gained knowledge and practical application of groupwork skills
- Increased communication & assertiveness skills
- Identified personal learning styles
- Development of an individual progression plan
- Gained information and knowledge of further opportunities in education, training and employment.

The participants experienced a change in their thinking about their own abilities and life choices. By creating a positive learning experience through engaging in personal awareness, examining transferable skills, social analysis, study skills, as well as some health & wellbeing group sessions the

participants had a holistic learning experience. Participants responded very positively to the content and methods used in the programme. All participants progressed to further & higher education opportunities and employment. Key to the success of this programme was its holistic content and the fact that it examined and challenged internal limits that may have previously inhibited learning and progression. 30 participated in this course throughout 2015.

### **Progression outcomes include the following:**

- 1 progressed to FETAC level 5 Health Care ETB
- 1 progressed to FETAC level 4 horticulture course ETB
- 1 progressed to Waterford Institute of Technology Honours Degree in Criminology
- 1 is engaged in a B. Social Science Hon Degree in Youth & Community Work in UCC
- 1 volunteered in the local animal welfare shop
- 1 completed a night class: Introduction to Psychology
- 2 completed an Introduction to Computers class in the ETB
- 1 gained employment in a childcare facility through a CE initiative
- 1 is engaged with the Southern Health Board (outreached to Waterford) in an experiential personal development and facilitation skills course
- 2 participants accessed part-time work as well as continued with their studies
- 1 woman had a baby and has put her studies on hold for the moment

Participants became more active citizens and involved in community activities such as the following:

- Volunteering in local animal welfare initiatives
- Joined the voluntary management of Women's Centre
- Actively involved in a women's history group
- 5 took part in dancing sessions in a local community organisation
- 9 were involved in a social enterprise activity on an open day
- 9 attended a career guidance workshop with REGSA
- 2 in caring roles within their own extended families

### **The Drop-In Café**

The drop-in café operated on a limited basis throughout the year due to reduced hours of the core NCCWN staff. The Drop-In was visited by approximately 20 women throughout the year, some of these women have joined groups in the Women's Centre and others have gained information and advocacy and have been referred to other organisations.

### **Alternative Therapy Sessions**

40 availed of one-to- one alternative therapy sessions such as reflexology in 2015 with Camilla Clarke, Holistic & Complimentary Therapist. The purpose of this initiative is to improve access to alternative health options to women who could not otherwise afford it.



### **Staff Training and Development in 2014**

#### **Facilitators Panel**

Three from the Women's Centre facilitators' panel availed of mentoring and continuous professional development training throughout 2015.

#### **Work Practice**

One past participant completed her student placement for a third level programme with mentoring, supervision and study support.

#### **In-service Training**

Five Tus and four Community Employment workers participated in induction, mentoring and ongoing in-service training.

#### **First Aid Training**

Five staff members completed First Aid Training

## Childcare Training

Ten staff members completed Aistear Training, three completed Level 5 Early Childhood Care and Education, three attended Equality & Diversity Training, two completed Level 5 Special Needs Assistant, and three completed Supervision in Childcare Level 6.

## Student Placements

Five students were supported through the provision of work placement in the Childcare Centre

## New programme for women

In 2014 the Women's Centre along with the other 16 NCCWN women's community development projects throughout the country began a yearlong campaign to have the funding for women's projects ring-fenced. We were delighted that this campaign was successful and a new women's programme under the Department of Justice & Equality was announced in March 2015. This gives the NCCWN long-term core funding and continuity to the 17 NCCWN women's projects across Ireland including the Women's Centre. Thanks to everyone who supported our campaign locally, who wrote letters, signed petitions and who lobbied our local political representatives. Thanks also to local and national representatives who supported us. It is very heartening and affirming to have the work of the Centre and the NCCWN acknowledged and valued.

## NCCWN networking day in Waterford



Members of Advisory Group and Staff from NCCWN Ronanstown Women's CDP visited the Women's Centre on the 2nd December as part of a networking exercise. They met with the Health & Wellbeing and Women Exploring Options groups and also with staff and Advisory Group. Both groups recognised the value of networking and learning from each other and wish to continue this link.

## Women's Centre Annual Christmas Breakfast 2015



On the 16th December the Women's Centre hosted its annual 'Christmas Breakfast' for groups attending the Centre. The 'Full Irish' was served along with festive treats and Christmas Carols. Christmas Hampers donated by 'Health and Wellbeing' were raffled and €140 was donated to the women's centre.



## Democratic Representation

Waterford NCCWN continued developing the organisational structure in 2015. Policies on criteria for representation were piloted within the Centre to ensure the management committee truly represents and reflects the needs and issues of the women's groups we work with. It also aims to increase representation on the Women's Centre Management structure and to use it as a stepping stone and learning opportunity to increase the representation of women experiencing disadvantage at regional and national levels of the NCCWN and other relevant decision making fora. A new Corework Group representing all groups in the Centre was formed in 2015. Two represented this group on the management/advisory committee during the year. Management member Ann Fitzgerald was elected chairwomen on the National Collective of Community Women's Networks. Alison Langford, director, was elected Chairwomen of the Women's Centre at the Annual General Meeting on June 10th.

## Appreciations

The women's groups, volunteers, directors, management committee and staff of the Women's Centre wish to thank all who contributed and made possible the work of the Centre in 2015 through the provision of services, funding, advice, collaboration, networking, support and use of resources.

