

Company Registration Number 239727 CHY 13183 Registered Charity Number 20040352

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

25 years delivering women's community education in Waterford 1995-2020



Cutting the cake in Waterford Central Library on International Women's Day 2020



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



wwetb
An t-Éireannach ag an t-Éireann
Waterford and Wexford
Education and Training Board



pobal
supporting communities



Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Phort Láirge
Waterford City & County Council

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme
2017-2022



WATERFORD

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1. Chairwoman's Address

by Helen Raffety

It gives me great pleasure to give the Chairwoman's Address for the 25th Anniversary Waterford Women's Centre Annual Report. I have been involved in this project since it began in many ways and was delighted to be elected Chairwomen at the end of 2019, when Alison Langford stepped down after serving for three years. Our thanks to Alison, who chaired the Centre during a difficult stage of dealing with a debt and the threat of losing our premises on Manor Street. I am happy to report that with a lot of hard work, goodwill and help from friends we finally worked our way through it, as we always do, and we have managed to secure our future.

It is apt I think on our 25th anniversary to remember the other women who chaired the Women's Centre since 1995. The first Chairwoman back in 1995, when we were then a two-county EU Funded project with Access Wexford, was Maeve O'Grady. Maeve is still a pivotal part of the Centre. Ruth Smith followed Maeve as Chair from 2001 – 2003 and continued to facilitate in the Centre for many years afterwards. Rose Hearne-Todd followed Ruth as Chair from 2003-2005. Rose went on to work in WIT Community Education and still works closely with the Centre through the delivery of the Community Certificate. Miriam Holt took up the role from 2006 – 2010 during which time Miriam became employed as the National Coordinator of the NCCWN beginning a new national programme together with 17 other women's CDPs. Ann Fitzgerald became Chair in 2011 – 2014. Ann remains as a facilitator in the Women's Centre and is an integral part of our Women's History Group and is also Chairwomen of the NCCWN. Alison Langford was elected Chair in 2016 – 2019 and saw the Centre through a turbulent time of debt and uncertainty. Alison continues in the Women's Centre as a facilitator. I am delighted to be the seventh Chairwoman in 25 years.

I think it is safe to say there never was a year quite like 2020. What a year it's been. From the beginning of 2020, from January to March, the preparations for our annual International Women's Day events including the inaugural 'Well Girl Walk' were all-consuming. We managed, by the skin of our teeth, to hold all our events including the fundraising walk on the 8th of March. This was undoubtedly the high point of the year. A well-deserved mention must go to Maureen Tobin, who along with her job as LTI Coordinator, volunteered to lead the Fundraising Team who did such a tremendous job of getting individual and corporate sponsorship with the help of Alan Quinlan, CEO and Co-Founder of Dimply, the Fundraising Team, head of Corporate Engagement.



The whole country, and the world, came to a standstill shortly after that. Our newly established garden ran wild as the Centre was empty for many months. However, the staff didn't let the grass grow under their feet, within a week of lockdown they hit the ground running with online groups and linking in with our participants in any way possible. We all had a steep learning curve as Zoom became the order

of the day. While it was not the same as meeting in person, we managed to create and facilitate a good alternative given the unimaginable circumstances. We telephoned those who could not engage, we supported those who could do so, we even resorted to letter writing again to ensure contact was made. Not alone did we continue to deliver programmes online, we increased the number of programmes on offer.

The Crèche staff need a special mention here. While most of our staff worked from the safety of their homes, the Childcare staff went back to work in the centre in July to provide childcare for essential workers.

I would like to express my gratitude to our 2020 funders and contributors without whom none of our work could happen:

NCCWN (National Collective of Community Women's Networks) for the provision of our core staff through the National Women's Equality & Development Programme from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, the Department through Pobal and the National Childcare Scheme also fund our Childcare Centre; to the Department of Employment and Social Protection funding our Lead into Employment Programme under the Activation & Family Support Programme and Community Employment and TUS for the provision of essential workers; Waterford-Wexford Education & Training Board for programme funding; Waterford Council for supporting the Centre through the Supporting Communities and Community Enhancement Funds, many thanks for supporting us to do essential maintenance. Thanks also to Creative Ireland Waterford for supporting the Women's History's Project, and to Waterford Council Festival and Events for supporting our



International Women's Day Festival. Thank you to Oasis House for funding the Domestic Abuse Support Group. In addition to public funds received in 2020 I would like mention to our 2020 main corporate partners, Eirgen Pharma and Sonas Bathrooms who generously

supported the 'Well Girl Walk' campaign which was set up to pay the debt. We were delighted with the wonderful support we received from individuals and local businesses whose donations and sponsorship made a huge difference in reducing the debt.

Richard Slone Managing Director Sonas Bathrooms visits the Women's Centre with a generous donation



Eirgen Pharma celebrate International Women's Day with a visit from the Women's Centre and a generous contribution to the Centre

Thanks to everyone who contributed, helped in any way and those who walked with us on the 8th March. Thanks to our management committee and our staff and friends of the Women's Centre for your weekly donations to the Centre, to those who support our Charity Shop with donations and as customers. The Shop brings in much needed income. Finally, thanks to Jones Business Systems and the Cathedral of Most Holy Trinity for their annual donation.

We look forward to the Women's Centre returning to normal in 2021 and once again meeting face-to face.

Helen Rafferty, Chairwoman

December 2020

2. Vision & Values

VISION STATEMENT

Creating a just and fair society for women experiencing disadvantage

MISSION

WATERFORD WOMEN'S CENTRE IS A FEMINIST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION WORKING COLLECTIVELY TO:

- 1. Remove barriers & support women's access to developmental opportunities through community education**
- 2. Provide a community Childcare Service which fully supports the developmental needs of children**

EQUALITY STATEMENT

This Equality Statement aims to ensure that Waterford Women's Centre is a space where equality and respect is fostered and exercised at all times when dealing with the users of the Centre, employees and external agencies.

Waterford Women's Centre is an Equal Opportunities Employer committed to equality of opportunity for existing and potential employees. Employees, participants, and organisations we work with will be treated with dignity and respect at all times.

The Board of Management is committed to ensuring that all the work of Waterford Women's Centre is underpinned by equality.

3. The Work in 2020

Childcare Centre:

The Women's Centre Childcare Service provides care for up to 42 children from 15 months to 6 years daily. Our Childcare Service, in keeping with the ethos of the Women's Centre, places children's needs central. The service opens from 8.45 am until 5.15 pm Monday to Friday. Our small numbers enable the development of meaningful relationships.



Our aim is to provide a safe, comfortable, happy environment for children and parents. The children are encouraged to participate in active outdoor play daily. The benefits of being in nature are recognised and facilitated through fun growing projects and visits to the Women's Centre Garden to pick blackberries, strawberries, and apples.

Our open-door policy ensures that there is always a staff member available to meet with parents. 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.C.C.S (Community Childcare Subvention Scheme) subsidy scheme for eligible parents in community childcare facilities; NCS (National Childcare Scheme) support for parents to meet their childcare costs.

Blackberry picking in the Women's Centre September

Our Childcare workers are fully qualified and carefully selected to provide a caring and professional service. Through understanding that children learn mainly through play and interactions with their peers, we promote a social atmosphere which facilitates the development of friendships. Children are encouraged to express themselves and to work and play together. The programme offered is varied, stimulating and flexible and allows all ages to learn at their own pace. Fun is central to all activities. We follow Siolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.

A dedicated sleep room is provided with flexible sleep routines based on the child's needs. The Childcare Centre works together with the Women's Centre to support women remove barriers to accessing training, education, information, services, and employment. In removing barriers to participation for women the provision of childcare is important. In 2020 the Women's Centre Childcare Service cared for a total 60 children across 50 families. There was a reduction in our overall numbers due to the pandemic, as the service closed from March 12th to July 6th, 2020.

Before reopening on Monday 6th July, work had to be completed to comply with Covid-19 regulations. Covid-19 policy and procedures were developed, and all staff participated in online training on Covid-19 guidelines and regulations. Parents were sent the new policies, procedures and guidelines prior to returning to the service.

During the lockdown period from March to July the Childcare staff updated their training online including First Aid, Manual Handling and Managing Challenging Behaviour. Staff also changed the

layout of each room as required to comply with the new regulations.

On returning to the Service in July new equipment, signage and outdoor toys were purchased as children were encouraged to play outside as much as possible, along with the necessary PPE materials, purchased from the Pobal Reopening Grant. The Reopening Grant also provided for additional staff, capital work and materials, which supported the upgrading of our playground and the building of an outside room attached to the pre-school room. This fund also provided coverings for wet weather to allow for parents waiting to collect children in bad weather and the children and staff to use the outdoor space in all weathers.

In 2020, 30% of the families that use the Childcare Service were from one-parent families headed by women. 15% of parents were supported by the NCS to support the return to education, 55% were supported by ECCE free preschool and the support of NCS (National Childcare Scheme). 10% of parents attended programmes in the Women's Centre, 10% attended English classes and other supports for new communities. 50% of parents attended back to education programmes in further education or third level and 30% gained employment.

Pathways to Employment

by Denise Wall LTI Coordinator

Pathways to Employment, funded by Waterford Wexford Education & Training Board (WWETB) Local Training Initiative (LTI), was first delivered in the Women's Centre in 2018. The programme provided for women without formal qualifications an identified progression option to gaining a qualification and/or to further education, training, and employment. Pathways to Employment provides an opportunity to get a QQI Level 4 Major Award in General Learning.



The first programme was completed in June 2020. Five participants received a Level 4 award in General Learning and four received component awards. It was described as 'a figuring-out year' which was a successful strategy and the programme engaged women who otherwise might not have engaged in further education or training. Feedback from the group attributed their successful certification to the supportive group environment provided by the Women's Centre.



In March 2020 the lockdown due to COVID-19 meant a blended learning approach using remote delivery was necessary to complete the programme. Despite this the progression routes for the group were very impressive: four women went on to Further Education/Training, one to an apprenticeship programme, one to part-time employment and one to self-employment.

In September 2020, nine new women joined the Pathways to Employment programme and will continue their studies until June 2021. A non-accredited module was introduced to the group to support them to use remote learning tools like Zoom and Google Classrooms, which was very successful in showing the new group how we could work remotely should the need arise. Participants were provided with laptops, and when we went into lockdown again during the autumn, we were able to seamlessly conduct classes and groupwork remotely.



In December 2020, we were very sorry to say goodbye to LTI Coordinator Maureen Tobin who retired from the Women's Centre, and wish Maureen a long, happy healthy retirement. We are delighted to welcome our new Coordinator Denise Wall to our Women's Centre's team.

**Maureen Tobin LTI Pathways to Employment Coordinator at International Women's Day Festival 2020
members of the Pathways to Employment Group**

Community Education Programmes

by Kate Crotty - Outreach, Training & Development Coordinator

Waterford Women's Centre delivers community education courses, using learner-centred Community Education methodologies, with a focus on collective learning and an understanding of the importance of using varied methodologies to cater for multiple learning styles. Throughout the groups women are supported to increase confidence, identify and challenge internal and external barriers, and develop a new sense of belief in themselves. Experienced facilitators guide the group participants towards their full potential, challenging inequality, promoting diversity, and bringing awareness to the limits of conditioning. All facilitators rose to the challenges that Covid-19 lockdown restrictions presented such as learning new skills to facilitate online work and supporting group participants throughout such challenging times.



Women's Centre's Community Education Facilitators June 2020

A feminist approach that is underpinned by an ethos of equality is promoted within the organisation and operates throughout all courses. The Centre has women's development at its core and identifies, encourages, supports and mentors women that show leadership qualities within groups, to reach their full potential.

Throughout the Centre all courses have a community education ethos whether they are developmental-focused or creative-focused.

'For Maslow the aim of creativity is not creative products or achievements, nor is creativity an act of problem solving. He thought instead of creativity as a process which developed the person, allowing self-acceptance, self-esteem, autonomy, detachment, problem-centring and the expression of emotion' (Maslow 1968, p.145 cited in Carlile & Jordan 2012 p. 264).

It is with this view in mind that creative courses in the Women Centre are designed, as it is well documented that creativity and craft is beneficial towards building confidence.

Health & Wellbeing

The programme was funded in 2020 by WWETB. This course supports women to overcome oppression, increase coping strategies and improve confidence and wellbeing. Assertiveness training is also a popular aspect of this course. Methodologies include role play, energisers, small groupwork, taking part in feedback loops, working in pairs, graphic images, guided reading, meditation and yoga.

The Health & Wellbeing is a very popular course at the Women's Centre and up to 30 women attended the course during 2020. Referrals were received throughout the year from community and statutory agencies and facilitates continuous intake as places become available.

A blended learning environment was facilitated starting off with face-to-face group sessions and continuing with Zoom group sessions throughout late Spring to Summer 2020.

Outcomes:

- Increased sense of connectiveness and belonging
- Improved ability to recognise and articulate needs
- Developed an understanding of living in a diverse world through communicating with women from different cultures
- Increased confidence and self-belief
- Improved ability to recognise stress and develop strategies to deal with stress, particularly during lockdown
- Assertiveness training
- Improved group work skills
- Developed a new set of tools for communication online e.g., becoming familiar with the Zoom application and associated tools, and new technologies

Group participants and facilitators alike learned new skills and new technologies in order to remain connected throughout the Government Covid-19 lockdown in the Spring/Summer of 2020. Group participants continued to attend their course with the support of Health & Wellbeing facilitators. It was apparent that during the lockdown the Health & Wellbeing course was a very good support to all who participated. Evaluations suggest that the support of group contact albeit online, was very beneficial towards alleviating added isolation and fear due to Covid-19 restrictions. In the participants' own words:

"the Health & Wellbeing course was a lifeline..." during difficult times.

Lead into Employment

The 'Lead into Employment' course was completed in June 2020. This course was funded by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, through the Activation and Family Support Programme. Twenty-five women attended this course in 2020.

The 'Lead Into Employment' course involved working intensely with women who were unemployed and receiving a Social Welfare payment. The course involved identifying and exploring barriers to participants' progression and where possible addressing the barriers whether internal or external. The course also involved identifying new skills and building on existing ones. Study skills were also explored to support participants who wanted to progress to an accredited course, as well as the development of a CV. In the past, participants of this course have progressed to further and higher education, and some had the opportunity to progress to facilitator training via an apprentice model developed by the Women's Centre. Three of the current facilitators employed by the Women's Centre have come through the 'Lead Into Employment' course. Also, three past participants of this course have become members of the WWC board of management.

Outcomes:

- Increase in confidence
- Recognition of transferable skills
- Personal development

- Understanding of diversity
- Social analysis, exploration of Class, Gender and Culture
- Development of a more positive outlook
- Recognition and willingness to deal with barriers to progression
- Improved sense of self-esteem
- Development of groupwork skills
- Increased study skills
- Development of a progression plan

There is no doubt that this course has made a positive difference to participants that completed the course. In Spring/Summer 2020 this course was also interrupted by the Covid-19 lockdown, however some participants continued their group sessions online and remained connected to the Women Centre. The Women's Centre also continued to support the participants who were members of this group into 2021 until a progression plan is secured for all participants that wish to have one.

The Bonnet Project



The Bonnet Project combines community education and local history to enable participants be part of a live international art project, **Roses from the Heart**, remembering 25,566 women who were sentenced to transportation as convicts from Ireland and UK to Australia and Tasmania (formerly called Van Diemen's Land) between 1788 & 1853. Approximately 300 of these women were from Waterford and many left families behind and never returned. **Roses from the Heart** Project founder, Christina Henri, chose a cloth bonnet, taken from an original 1860s servant's bonnet, to name and remember each of the women who were forgotten. The Women's Centre **Bonnet Project** supported 11 women in 2020 to choose and research a woman to make a bonnet for and to be part of this annual international exhibition. Participants learn skills necessary to research, make and decorate a bonnet.

They develop an awareness of women's history and can participate in an event to launch the bonnet exhibition.



Study Skills

The Women's Centre recognised that some participants were inhibited from progressing to further and higher education courses due to lack of opportunity to explore study skills in detail. Also, it was the main reason cited by participants who previously dropped out of accredited courses. Consequently, in June 2020 the Centre secured funding to begin a study skills course in September 2020. This made it possible to support participants who wish to progress to an accredited course inside or outside the Centre. This course also supported participants from Women's Centre's courses to maintain participation in courses that they progressed to. The course participants met with their facilitator once a week and received some work to continue at home during their own time. The following are elements of this course:

- Reading with confidence
- Becoming comfortable with writing and confident to write in the company of others
- Exploring sentence structure
- Paragraphs & using link words
- Reflective Journal writing and exploring the difference between description and reflection
- Essay writing, and deconstructing the components of an essay
- Harvard Referencing
- Exploring assessment briefs and examining the key components



Some participants on the Study Skills course

In addition to exploring the nuts and bolts of reading/writing and writing for accreditation, participants also explored some of the conditioned responses to writing and reflected on their past experiences in education. This was very beneficial as participants were given the time to explore what inhibited their progress and look at the internal and external barriers around study skills. Therefore, a broad definition of literacy was explored. Computer competency skills was also an element of this course as all colleges require assignments to be typed and emailed. This course continues throughout the academic year until June 2021. Eight participants took part in this course.

Certificate in Community Studies

In partnership with Waterford Institute of Technology, the Women's Centre delivered a QQI Level 6 Certificate in Community Studies. The course was funded by WWETB in order to support people that did not previously have opportunity or funding to attend a third level course parttime. The Special Purpose Award include the following modules:

- Personal Effectiveness
- Groupwork & Facilitation Skills
- Community Development.

This special purpose award in Community Studies is for those already working in the community, voluntary or paid, and facilitates practical and theoretical training and education for community workers. Twenty-four participants took part in the Community Certificate in 2020 in the Women's Centre, one course finished in June 2020 and another started in September 2020 via Zoom during Government Covid-19 lockdowns.

Eleven students completed their Community Certificate in June 2020 and graduated in October 2020, however their graduation was unfortunately remote due to lockdown.



June 2020 Community Certificate Group Graduated in October 2021

In September 2020 twelve participants started, two got full time jobs in November 2020 and ten participants completed their first module in December 2020.



The second Certificate group started in September 2020 and will complete in June 2021 Photo taken in the venue for the last group session St. Patricks Gateway (missing from photo is K. Connolly who also took part.)

4. Other work in 2020

History Project

The Women's History Group coordinates the following work annually in recognition of the importance of highlighting women's history:

1. Plan, organise and coordinate the International Women's Day History Festival.
2. Identify, research and commemorate Waterford women in history, many of whom may otherwise be forgotten, through our Pink Plaque Campaign
3. Host a Women's History walk through Waterford city
5. Hosts Women's History exhibitions
6. Facilitates the Bonnet Project

Our thanks to Ann Fitzgerald and Eleanor Murphy, mainstays of this group, for their work, all voluntary, and their unending commitment to the development of the Waterford Women's History Project.



History work in 2020 The Women's Centre in partnership with Waterford Civic Trust unveiled another Blue Plaque, this time to the Daly Family, Mai, Debbie and their mother Margaret, who ran a café for the poor of Waterford, better known as 'the shop', at no. 5 Arundel Lane. It was attended by over 100 people. Des Griffin, Chair of the Waterford Civic Trust, was the MC on the day and welcomed the Mayor of Waterford Cllr. John Pratt. Breda Freyne, niece of Mai and Debbie Daly, unveiled the plaque and nephew Robert Lanigan spoke on behalf of the Daly family, many generations of whom

were in attendance. Eleanor Murphy, Women's Centre History Group, spoke about the history of the Daly Family and gave examples of how these resilient women treated everyone who came to their café equally and without judgement.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY FESTIVAL 2020
Celebrating Waterford Women's History
25 years working with women in Waterford

Tuesday 3 March 9.15-11.15	Festival Launch - International Circle Dance, Waterford Institute of Technology, College Street Campus, College Street, Waterford
Wednesday 4 March 11-1	In association with Waterford Civic Trust. A Heritage Blue Plaque will be unveiled in Arundel Lane to the Daly Family
Thursday 5 March 11-1	Launch of Women's History exhibition in Waterford Central Library
Sunday 8 March International Women's Day	'Walk Girl' Walk for the Women's Centre, Waterford Greenway Carrigrohane Car Park 11am

waterford women's centre - nccwn
www.waterfordwomenscentre.com

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International Women's Day 2020

Waterford Women's Centre 25th anniversary 1995 – 2020



50 attended the Festival Launch on Tuesday 3rd March in Waterford Institute of Technology, College Street Campus, with an International Circle Dance workshop, led by Outreach Development Coordinator, Kate Crotty

On Thursday 5th March over 100 attended the launch of the annual Women's History Exhibition in Waterford Central Library. The exhibition was launched by Jane Cantwell, Waterford City and County Libraries, who said how delighted they were to be trusted with this important exhibition and acknowledged its popularity. Jane said it was important that this exhibition is somewhere that is open and accessible to everyone, and the library provides such a space. Ann Fitzgerald, Women's Centre History Group, acknowledged the support received for the new and improved exhibition stand from Creative Ireland Waterford. Ann also acknowledged the collaboration between the History Group and Andrew Kelly in the ongoing work of recording women's history in Waterford. This year's exhibition also celebrated 25 years of the Waterford Women's Centre. Maeve O'Grady, founder member of the Women's Centre, spoke about the growth and development of the Centre since 1995 and attributed its successes to working collectively both at a local level and national level, as one of 17 Women's Centres under the National Collective of Community Women's Networks (NCCWN).



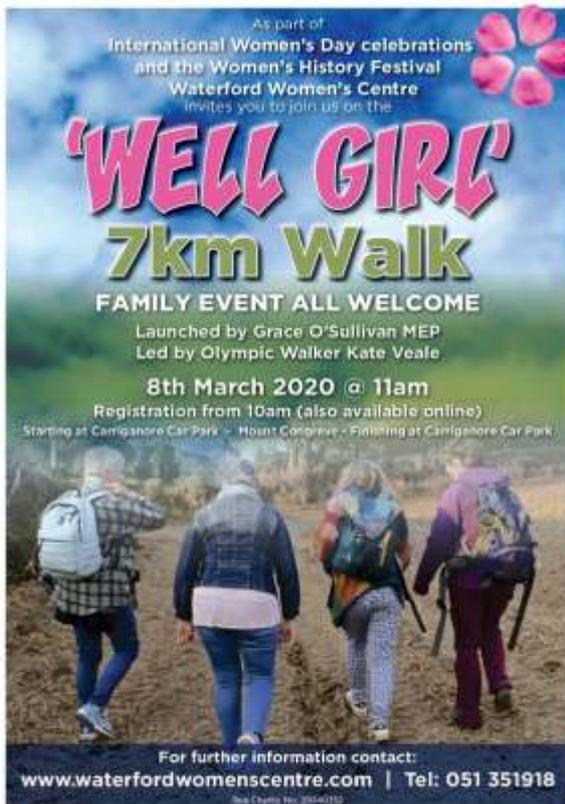
Exhibition of beautiful handmade bonnets from the 'Bonnet Project' facilitated by Liz Heffernan and funded by the WWETB. The bonnet exhibition is part of the larger 'Roses from the Heart' exhibition remembering Waterford women who were sentenced to transportation to Tasmania. Michelle Tyler, Women's Centre, read a letter from Christine Henri founder of the Roses from the Heart Project, appreciating the continuation of the work in Waterford at the launch of the exhibition.



Music was by the Women's Centre singers under the direction of local musician Jane O'Brien-Moran who also led the audience in a rendition of Happy Birthday to the Women's Centre to end the festival.

Thanks to all who attended the festival and to those who supported it; the Central Library, Waterford Civic Trust, WIT, WWETB, Creative Ireland Waterford & Waterford Council Festival Grant.

Well Girl Walk



A fundraising event the 'Well Girl' walk took place on Sunday 8th March, International Women's Day.

Local singer and member of the Mount Sion Choir, Angel, entertained the large crowd that gathered in the WIT Arena Greenway car park from 10 am onwards.



Local MEP Grace O'Sullivan addressed the gathering and praised the work of the Women's Centre over the past 25 years and was delighted to launch the first ever 'Well Girl' walk on International Women's Day. Grace and Olympian walker, Kate Veale, World Youth Champion, Irish record holder and European Cup medallist, together led the walkers on the 7 km walk from the car park to the Greenway on to Mount Congreve Gardens and back.

Local MEP Grace O'Sullivan & Olympian walker, Kate Veale, lead the way



More than 300 walkers registered in the WIT Arena Greenway Carpark on the day. It was a social occasion and a walk for all the family with sunshine all the way. Many used it as an opportunity to celebrate International Women's Day with a walk together with friends or other groups they belonged to. Many current and past participants, staff and parents of the Women's Centre and Childcare Service along with family and friends, turned out in numbers to provide very welcome support. The weather was in our favour and remained dry and sunny almost till the end.

Kate Veale, World Youth Champion, Irish record holder and European Cup medallist in the Women's Centre

A big thanks to all who made the day such a success: the fundraising team - Maureen Tobin, Liz Heffernan, Catherine Drea, Catherine McNena and Alison Langford; to those who helped on the day, Pat Tobin, Ann Kavanagh, Tony Grey, Mary Langford and John Grey.

All were kept safe and sound by the presence of Civil Defence which was much appreciated. When the walkers returned to the car park drinks were provided compliments of Lidl and beautiful fresh fruit from Iverk Produce, Piltown.

Thanks to Graphic Image and Claire O'Donovan Design for the Well Girl poster. WLR FM and BEAT 102-103 gave great coverage before the walk and all the festival events as did Waterford in Your Pocket. Thanks also to the RSC for the Hi-vis vests and to the staff from Apple who along with team leader, Niamh Ivory, volunteered on the day. A massive thanks to all who walked in this the first of what we hope will become an annual event.

Domestic Abuse Support

MEND Partner Support Programme:

The Women's Centre provides supports for the partners of men attending the MEND Male Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse funded by the Men's Development Network. This programme provides one to one support, advocacy, information, and referrals. 15 women were supported in 2020.

Domestic Violence Support Group:

A support programme for women who experienced domestic abuse offers a safe, confidential space, providing women with a needs-based programme to support recovery and rebuild confidence is delivered by the Women's Centre and funded by Oasis House Women's Refuge. Three participants completed this programme in 2020. Due to Covid 19 some of the sessions were partly delivered on-line.

Local Area Network opposing Violence Against Women:

In November the Women's Centre as a member of the LAN recorded an information and awareness raising seminar 'We are still here' in recognition of the increase in cases of domestic violence during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Waterford Local Area Network (LAN) is a network of statutory, community and voluntary groups that provide services to women and children 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, help women access those services and address issues that place barriers to women and children's safety.

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 aimed to highlight the issues for those experiencing domestic and sexual violence and abuse and how Covid restrictions further impacted on conditions. After the first lockdown, calls to services escalated, indicating that options to make contact were more limited during that time due to working from home and restricted movement. Figures from Safe Ireland (2020) reveal how nearly 3,500 women and nearly 600 children contacted a domestic violence service for the first time between March and August 2020. Women's Aid reported a 43% increase in calls to their helpline from March to the end of June compared with 2019, supporting over 6,500 callers. Similarly, they recorded a 71% increase in visits to their website and an 86% increase in the numbers of texts they received to their messaging support service between January and May 2020. During the Covid lockdown, Gardai recorded a 25% increase in call outs relating to domestic abuse compared with 2019 also (Women's Aid 2020). Every month between March and August 1,970 women and 411 children were supported by a domestic violence service in Ireland (Safe Ireland 2020). Yet there are reports of a 25% reduction in capacity in emergency refuges and domestic violence accommodation (Women's Aid 2020). These statistics provide only a tiny snapshot of how Covid-19 accelerated this problem for a significant number of women and children nationally, with serious risks to their health and wellbeing.

The recording was to highlight the fact that all the relevant services were still working despite the pandemic restrictions and local services were introduced by key members from each organisation.

This event was also linked into the National Women's Aid campaign which focused on Intimate relationship abuse, including online abuse, against young people (18-25 years). More information available on www.womensaid.ie or Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 900.

4. Review & Planning

A strategic planning process began in September 2020 and will be completed in 2021, towards the development of the new five-year Strategic Plan. Waterford Women's Centre carried out a consultation process with all stakeholders including women who use the Centre, parents of the Childcare Centre, agencies and organisations who collaborate in the work as well as the Board and the staff. The purpose of the consultation was to get feedback on the work of the Centre and to allow stakeholders to make any recommendations for the future.

5. Future Plans

In 2011 the Waterford Women's Centre became part of the National Collective of Community Women's Networks, providing needs-based supports and services for women throughout the country. The NCCWN national coordinator, Miriam Holt, is based in the Waterford Women's Centre. The Women's Centre works within the NCCWN National Women's Equality & Development Programme, under four strategic priorities: 1 Engagement: 2 Participation: 3 Policy and Equality: 4 Organisational Development and Sustainability. This ensures alignment of the work at a national level with 17 NCCWN women's projects across Ireland.

Future plans under each strategic priority

1 Engagement

To engage women experiencing disadvantage through outreach, supporting participation in new opportunities, provide a high-quality Childcare Service which meets the developmental needs of children.

The first and most important step in our work is engagement. To engage women who may not engage in more formal structures, a number of outreach strategies have developed over the last 25 years which include consistent relationships with all relevant local agencies working with women. Referrals are a two-way process, as women are supported to engage in the Women's Centre's programme and access additional supports and services as identified as part of their development. In 2021 and beyond, our engagement strategy is to be extended through the WWETB Mitigating against Educational Disadvantage (MAED) to localities in Waterford City and County. The Women's Centre is delighted with the opportunity to bring this women's development work to Waterford County while continuing to outreach and engage in the city.

2 Participation

To facilitate and support progression for women experiencing disadvantage from engagement to active participation and progression to relevant supports, training, education, and employment opportunities

From engagement to active participation in 2021 the Women's Centre will continue to deliver existing programmes: Health & Wellbeing, Certificate in Community Studies QQI Level 6, LTI Pathways to Employment QQI Level 4, DV Support Group, The Bonnet Project and Study Skills. In addition, the following programme are also planned for 2021:

Advanced Facilitation Skills, Confidence Through Creativity, Women Exploring Options and Community Leadership Programme.

3 Policy and Equality

Articulate and voice issues that matter to women, and influence policy through representation at a local, regional, and national level.

Continue ongoing representation on relevant structures: Waterford Institute of Technology Community Education Steering Group, PPN, Local Area Network Opposing Violence Against Women, Waterford Childcare Committee, Waterford Wexford Education Training Board MEAD Steering Group, Oasis House, Waterford City & County Domestic Abuse Outreach Programme Advisory Group, NCCWN National Board.

Identify other relevant decision-making fora that the Women's Centre should engage with for example the LTI Network at regional level / LCDC.

Discussions will take place with staff and the Women's Centre Board to identify research to be undertaken by the Women's Centre to highlight and address barriers faced by working-class women when engaging in training, education, and employment.

Explore funding for recording the work of the Women's Centre through film, relating it to the research named above (Post COVID). Organise a public launch of the research and the film.

To continue to be part of the NCCWN through regular meetings with NCCWN Coordinator; having a second representative from Waterford Women's Centre on the Board of NCCWN; participate in national networking events and campaigns.

4. Organisational Development & Sustainability

AIM: Waterford Women's Centre will continue to operate from best practice and be a sustainable and effective organisation.

Continue to ensure a collective process is engaged throughout the project to support the ongoing development and sustainability of the Women's Centre as a feminist community development organisation.

Develop a strategy for recruitment and development of new directors for the Board with ongoing succession planning in place.

Ensure the Women's Centre is compliant with best practice in all relevant governance requirements.

6. Management & staff

Directors: Helen Rafferty (Chairwoman), Eleanor Murphy (Treasurer) and Maeve O'Grady Director,
Trustees: Lyndsey Griffin.



Core staff in 2020: Kate Crotty, Maureen Tobin, Francesca Jordan and Breda Murphy

Childcare Centre Coordinator: Sarah Walsh

Assistant Coordinator: Amie O'Shea-Daniels

Childcare Workers: Amy Fanning, Michelle Flynn, Lorraine Ryan, Stephanie Bible, Jessica Shortall and Lisa Stone.

Coordinator: Breda Murphy

Administrator/Project Worker: Francesca Jordan

Outreach Development Coordinator: Kate Crotty

Local Training Initiative Coordinator: Maureen Tobin

MEND Partner Support Worker: Veronica Malone

Community Employment: Catherine McNena, Anna Filipobic, Andrea Pejzic and Jennifer Dwyer

Students: Valeria Piana & Michelle Murphy.

A panel of facilitators also supports the work.

7.WORK WITH LOCAL AGENCIES in 2020

INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP / NETWORKING	KEY LINK PERSON INVOLVED FROM WWC	OVERALL PURPOSE OF WORKING RELATIONSHIP
1. Waterford Council for Homeless Services	Development / Outreach Coordinator/LTI Coordinator	Referrals to and from these organisations
2. Respond Housing	Development /Outreach Coordinator/LTI Coordinator	
3. The Mercy & Presentation Secondary Schools	LTI Coordinator	Referrals from these organisations
4. XLC Project	LTI Coordinator	
5. TREO	Project Coordinator	
6. Social Prescribing Project	Development Outreach Coordinator/LTI Coordinator	
7. Waterford Heritage Association	Chairwoman of History Group	Works with History Project on Heritage Blue Plaque
8. Waterford Institute of Technology	Community Certificate Coordinator	Work in partnership on Community Certificate
9. Waterford / Wexford Education and Training Board	Development Worker/LTI Coordinator/Project Coordinator	Referrals to and from Fund Programmes
10. Money Advice and Budgeting Services	Development /Outreach Coordinator LTI Coordinator	Referrals to and from Provide workshops for groups Support for individual participants
11. Edmund Rice Youth & Community	Project Coordinator	Support with additional space
12. Mount Sion Centre	Development / Outreach Coordinator	Support with additional space
13. Oasis House Women's Refuge	Project Coordinator	Referrals to and from Fund DV Support Group Partners on LAN
14. Domestic Abuse Support Services	Project Coordinator Development Outreach /Coordinator	Referrals to and from Member of DV Outreach Advisory Group
15. Tusla	Project Coordinator	Sit on DV Outreach DV Group

16. Waterford Youth Arts	Project Coordinator	Participation of Management Board & Provide Community Arts training in the WWC
17. St Brigid's and the Sacred Heart Community and Family Resource Centres	Project Coordinator	Referrals to and from Partner in LAN promote each other's Programmes
18. Credit Unions	Development Outreach Coordinator	Provide workshops for participants
19. Department of Social Protection	Development Outreach Coordinator Project Coordinator	Fund Programmes Referrals to
20. Waterford Rape & Sexual Centre	Development Outreach Coordinator Project Coordinator	Referrals to and from Work in partnership on LAN Committee
21. Aistear	Childcare Manager	Support for Childcare
22. Le Cheile	Project Coordinator	On LAN Committee
23. Tintean Housing	Development Outreach Coordinator/Project Coordinator	Referrals to and from On LAN Committee
24. Waterford Childcare Committee	Childcare Centre Manager	Support for the Childcare Centre
25. Men's Development Network	Project Coordinator MEND Partner Support Worker	WWC delivers Partner Support for MEND Referrals to On LAN Committee
26. Gardai	Project Coordinator	Gardai input in workshops Work in partnership on voter registration On LAN committee