



Chairperson's Report

A.G.M.

12th December 2024

Annual Report April 2023 – March 2024

G-old Community Partnership Surestart is now in its 23rd year of operation as a multi-agency organisation, delivering services to children and families in the Oldtown, Gortallowry, Killymoon, Ardboe, Dunamore, Pomeroy, Maghera and Town Parks East 2 wards of Mid-Ulster District Council.

The aims of Sure Start are to:

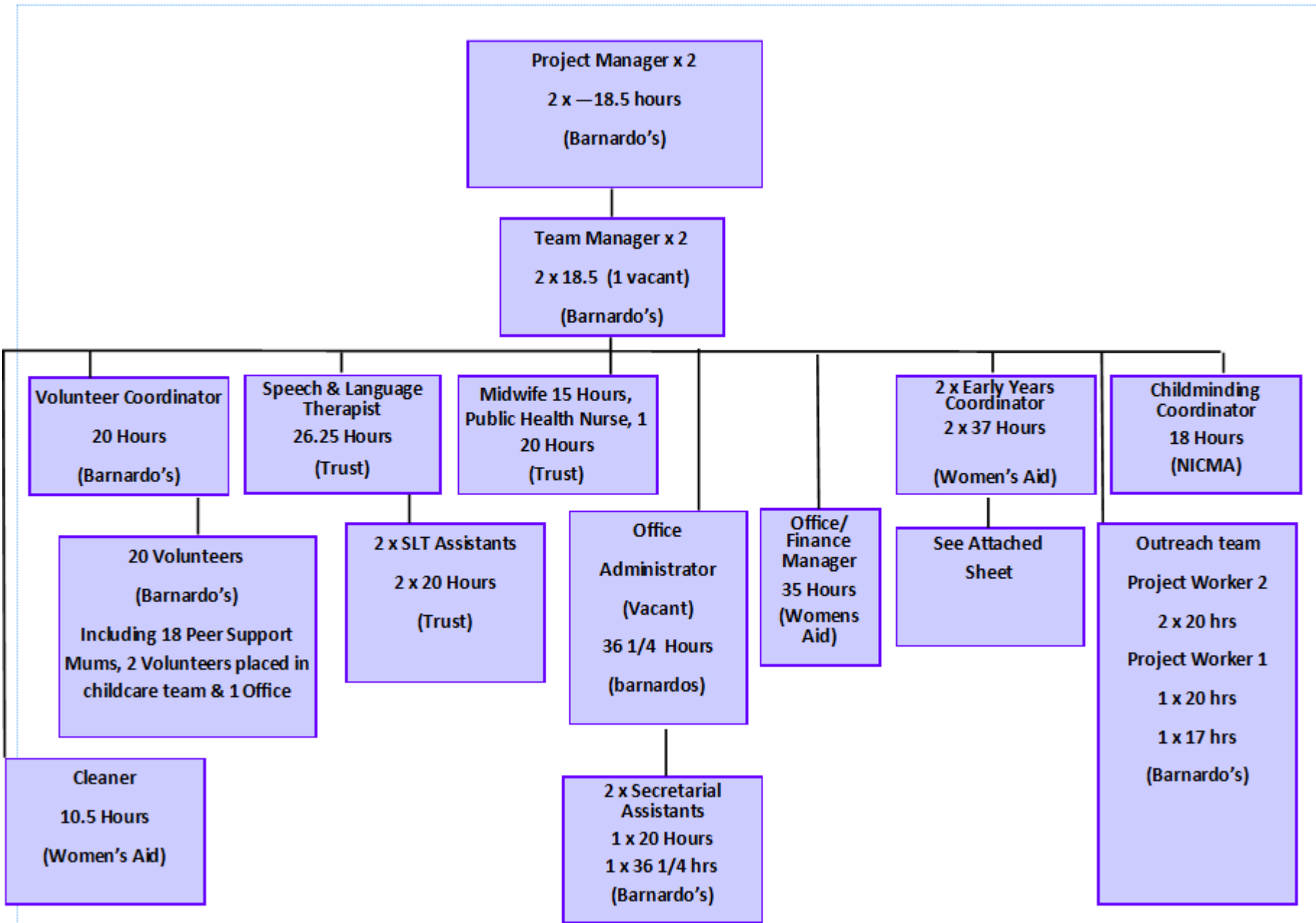
- Improve the ability to learn by encouraging stimulating play, improving language skills and the early identification and support of children with learning difficulties.
- Improve health by supporting parents in caring for children and promoting children's health and development.
- Improve social development by supporting the development of early relationships between parents and children, good parenting skills, family functioning and early identification and support of children with emotional, learning or behavioural difficulties.

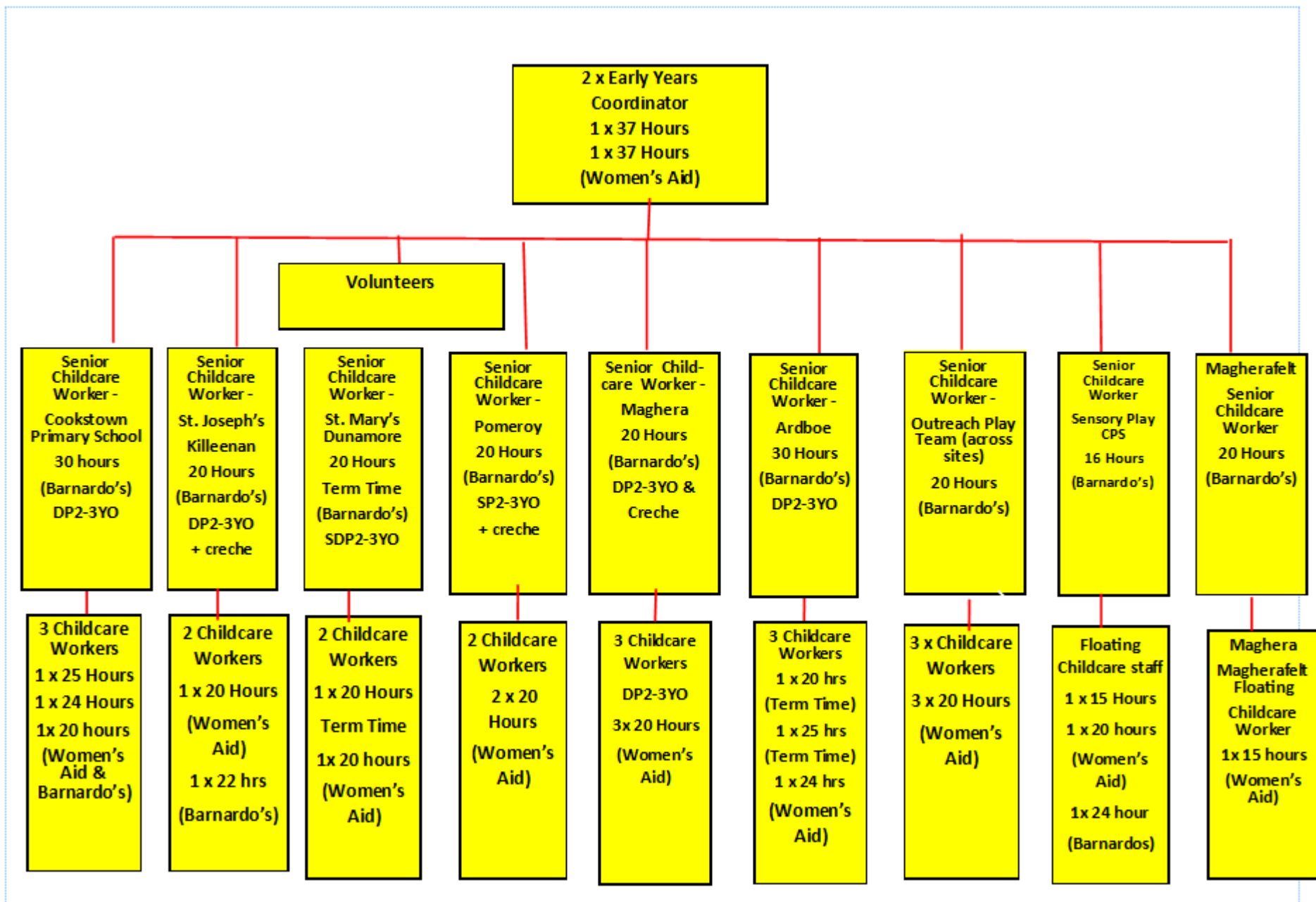
The Current Partners:

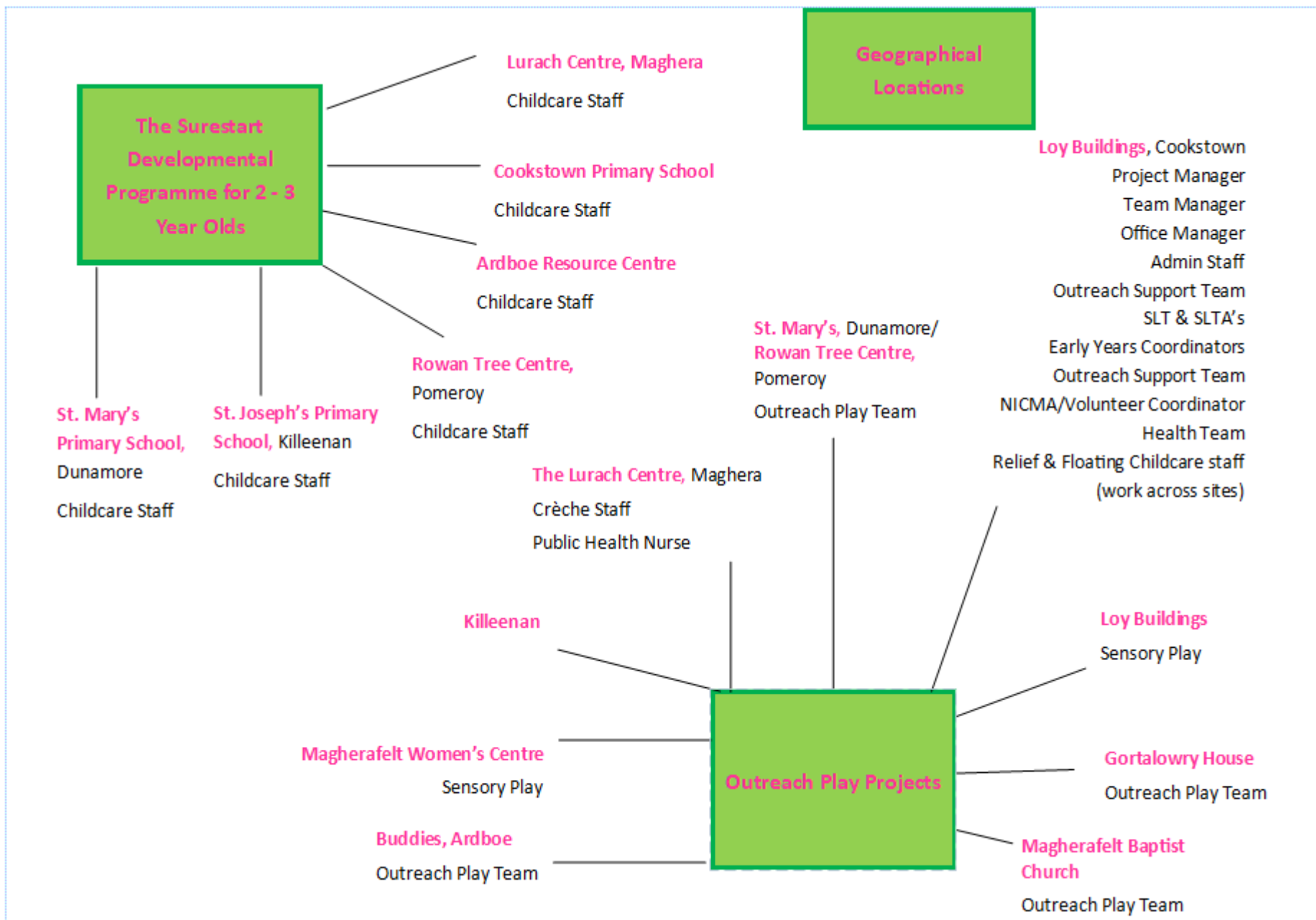
- Barnardo's
- Causeway and Mid-Ulster Women's Aid
- Cookstown Primary School
- Holy Trinity Primary School

- Mid Ulster Child Contact Centre
- Northern Health and Social Care Trust – Public Health Nursing
- Northern Health and Social Care Trust – Speech & Language Therapy
- NICMA

Barnardo's continues as Lead Body and Causeway and Mid-Ulster Women's Aid as Accountable Body for the Project. Management Committee meetings are held monthly except in July and August.







Current Service Provision

The Surestart Developmental Programme for 2-3 Year Olds.

- Cookstown Primary School - 2 programmes
- Ardboe Resource Centre - 2 programmes
- St Mary's Primary School, Dunamore - 1 programme
- St Joseph's Primary School, Killeenan - 1 programme
- Rowan Tree Centre, Pomeroy - 1 programme
- Lurach Centre Maghera - 1 programme

96 places offered to children in the Developmental Programmes.

Activity Levels for the Year

The following is an outline of the activities provided by staff throughout the year: -

REGISTRATIONS

Activity		Children	Adults
Initial registration visits			54
Registration tel calls			78
Registrations at centre			46

ANTENATAL

Activity	Programmes	Children	Adults
Antenatal Registrations			128
Antenatal Home visits	53 visits		33
Antenatal 1-1 support	33		30
Antenatal tel calls	17		17
Bumps to Babies	4		48
Antenatal Yoga	3		29
Hypnobirthing	5		35
Hypnobirthing 1-1	12 sessions		8
Welcome to the World	3		20

BREAST FEEDING

Activity	Programmes	Children	Adults
Infant Feeding	4		27
Breast Feeding Group			63
Breastfeeding 1-1 support	20		14
Peer Support referrals	562		
Peer Support calls	718		

POSTNATAL

Activity	Programmes	Children	Adults
Postnatal Home visits	96 visits		44
Postnatal Tel support	25 calls		23
Postnatal Reunion	1	13	13

FAMILY SUPPORT

Activity		Children	Adults
Family Support visits	115		33
Family Support 1-1	94		27
Family Support tel calls	66		31
Weaning sessions	4		17

RESPIRE CHILDMINDING

Activity		Children	Adults
Respite session	834	25	
Respite tel calls			30
Respite support visits	70		27

BABY PROGRAMMES

Activity	Programmes	Children	Adults
Baby Massage	14	108	109
Baby Movers	8	65	65
Let's Play the Baby Way	5	44	39
Baby Club	5	42	42
Blossoming Babies	5	25	25
Little Goldfish	6	65	57

PARENT PROGRAMMES

Activity	Programmes	Children	Adults
Nurturing	2		14
Fresh Little Minds	2		10
COOK IT	2		12
Understanding Little Minds	1		6
Daddy and Me	10	43	32
Paediatric First Aid	2		30

PLAY PROGRAMMES

Activity	Programmes	Children	Adults
Cookstown Lets Play		102	83
Dunamore Lets Play		27	24
Maghera Lets Play		37	30

Pomeroy Lets Play		46	34
Messy Play	1	10	10
Sensory Play	2	14	11
Art in Forest Play Prog	1	11	7
Beach Day Play Prog	4	39	29
Curious Tots Play Prog	1	21	17
Little Bakers Play Prog	1	10	8
Paint Explorers Play Prog	1	8	7
Wiggles & Giggles Play Prog	5	65	57

FAMILY FUN DAYS

Activity	Programmes	Children	Adults
Big Toddle Cookstown	2	43	31
Christmas Parties	2	137	110
Halloween Parties	2	111	90

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PROGRAMMES

Activity	Programmes	Children	Adults
Chatterbox Party	1	44	33
Bookstart Groups	10	55	42
Rhyme Time	2	17	15
PEEP	2	13	10
SLC advice tel calls	24		15
Babbling Babies	1	7	7
Walk & Talk	4	34	23
Craft & Chat	3	15	15
Talking Toddlers	2	13	11
Chat with Me	13	112	109

TOWN PARKS EAST Programmes

Activity		Children	Adults
Antenatal Home visits	12		8
Antenatal tel support			2
Initial Home visits			9
Postnatal Home visit	8		7
Family Support Home visit	12		6
Family Support tel calls	18		6
Baby Club	3	21	21

Resources provided

Resource	Quantity	Families
Baby Basics	100	81
Books	250	161
Bookstart	19	17
Dental Packs	83	79
Food Hampers	101	56
SLT	70	66
Toys	21	27
Play activities	24	24
Transition	76	76

Other Activities at Gold

- Financial and practical support was provided to families in the form of food and fuel vouchers from Barnardos Crisis Fund, SVP, Antioch Ministry along with toys for Christmas from Cash for Kids, and local businesses. Parents in need expecting the arrival of a new baby received Baby Basics packs through St Swithins Church Magherafelt.
- Staff represented the needs of families by attending multi agency meetings such as Family Support Hub, CYPSP Locality Group, Disability Forum etc.

Staff Training

Staff have undertaken the following mandatory and personal development training during the past year:

- Safeguarding and Impact of ACES – Staff and Volunteers
- Domestic Violence Awareness
- Designated Officer training
- Data Protection Refresher
- Paediatric First Aid
- Food Safety
- Developmental Programme for 2–3-Year-Olds and Cluster sessions
- Solihull Supervision training
- Wellcomm training
- Bilingual communication
- Occupational Therapy Awareness
- UNICEF Baby Friendly Level 1,2 & 3 Updates
- Sharing Sensitive News
- Use of Publisher / IT
- Mandatory updates and E-learning for Health professionals

Summary

While the past year has been challenging due to staffing issues there has been an increase in the number of registrations with 1377 children and 1684 parents registered. Service uptake of 59% is a 5% reduction on the previous year due primarily to staff vacancy, long term sickness and

recruitment difficulty which has also been reflected across the childcare sector. The unavailability of creche and reduction in play sessions has for a second year been a contributory factor in lower uptake by children and families.

During the past year 3 staff were on long term sick leave leading to dismissal of 2 staff on health grounds. 4 staff resigned and 2 staff returned from long term sick leave and fostering leave. At year end 42 posts filled and 5 vacant posts. Vacant posts include Administrator, Outreach Support Project Workers, Childcare Worker and Part Time Team Manager. It has been another very stressful year for the staff team and sincere appreciation is extended to all who worked with commitment and passion to support families.

The management committee agreed the Project Manager role be a shared role by Mary Tennyson and Claire Murphy on a permanent basis, both working 18.5 hours per week. Claire also holds the part time Team Manager position.

Thanks is extended to Avril Bowden who worked increased hours to support the finance and admin needs of the service due to administrator vacancy. Additional support was also provided by Martina Watson to help update Surestart Go database and Louise Foster to assist with year-end finance report preparation.

The Surestart Developmental Programmes for 2–3-Year-Olds were delivered to 98 children across 6 sites, i.e. 2 programmes in both Ardboe Resource Centre and Cookstown Primary School, 1 programme in St Joseph's, Killeenan, St Mary's, Dunamore, Rowantree Centre, Pomeroy and The Lurach Centre, Maghera. As with every year some programmes were oversubscribed with a waiting list in place. Staff worked flexibly across all sites to ensure programmes kept open. Health and Safety issues forced the programmes in Cookstown to relocate to a classroom within Cookstown Primary School as the mobiles were deemed unsafe for use by Barnardos Property Advisor. Sincere appreciation is extended to the childcare staff who worked flexibly, this often meant being moved to a different site at short notice and getting to know the needs of a new group of children.

Repairs were also carried out to the heating system in St Marys, Dunamore and new front door installed. Patio doors were installed in the Rowentree Centre Pomeroy to enable the children directly access the outside play area from the room used by the Developmental programme. Thanks is extended to Aodhan Gervin and Colin Fraser from Barnardos Property Services for their help and support.

Progress has been made with introduction of evaluative processes including Microsoft Forms and use of QR codes to capture impact of service provision and outcomes achieved.

Gold Community Partnership along with the other SureStart projects in the Northern Trust continues to promote breast feeding support for mothers and maintains UNICEF Baby Friendly Stage 3 status. Two breast feeding groups run weekly in Cookstown and Magherafelt and are generally well attended.

As parents continue to experience financial pressures due to cost of living crisis Golsd Surestart continues to seek support such as food hampers, vouchers, fuel stamps etc from charitable organisations including Baby Basics, Antioch SVP and Liberty Church. At Christmas local business have also donated toys and food parcels.

Inspection of all registered sites by the NHSCT Early Years Social Services Registration and Inspection were carried out in January and February, positive feedback was received and some recommendations on policy update.

Leases for premises at St Mary's Primary School, Dunamore and Cookstown Primary School remain outstanding.

Thanks, is also extended to Tracy Morrison who ensures offices in Loy St are kept clean and well maintained.

The management committee of Gold Community Partnership has had some change in membership with the resignation of Judith Searle when Rioghnach Murphy returned from maternity leave in May. Patricia Lewsley Mooney joined as a Director in March. Appreciation is extended for the commitment given by members of the Management Committee who have provided oversight and scrutiny of the activities and finances of the project during the past year.

Gold Community Partnership remains registered and compliant with the requirements of the Charity Commission for NI.

Absence of budget confirmation for 23/24 and concern for potential reduction in funding did impact on timely recruitment and planning activities for the year ahead is very difficult.

In July 2023 Causeway and Mid Ulster Womens Aid provided the Childcare Partnership with notice of their intention to withdraw from the role of Accountable Body for Gold Community Partnership. This has led to significant discussion and negotiation with Department of Education and Childcare Partnership to identify the process for Appointment of Accountable Body and impact of this change. These discussions are ongoing and in the interim Causeway and Mid Ulster Womens Aid continue as Accountable Body.

Future Plans

- Approval from DE/ Childcare Partnership on the process for replacing Causeway and Mid Ulster Womens Aid as Accountable Body.
- Increased programme delivery to children and their families to increase uptake of service.
- Increased service delivery in Town Parks East 2, Magherafelt.
- Development of Sensory space provision in Cookstown and Magherafelt for children with emerging needs.
- Recruitment of staff for vacant posts in Admin, Outreach Support, Childcare, Team Manager and SLC.
- Identification of suitable accommodation for Developmental Programme for 2-3 Year Olds in Cookstown

Finally, thanks to the families registered with Gold Community Partnership for their engagement with the service by attending programmes and allowing staff into their homes to support them on their parenting journey.

Thanks also to the staff team and volunteers for their hard work, creativity and determination to move activities back to face-to-face delivery in order to best support families.

The continued provision of funding by Department of Education in difficult economic times has enabled Gold Community Partnership to offer support to families across all eight ward areas.

***Riognach Murphy
Chairperson,
G-Old Community Partnership
December 2024***