

## Management

Mary McArdle Chairperson  
Martine Jackson Vice CP  
Rosaleen McCorley Treasurer  
Carol Jackson Secretary  
Jackie Bunting  
Janice Austin  
Ailish Scott

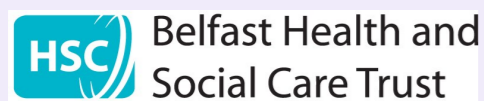
*A very Special  
Thanks  
To all our  
volunteers*

*A very Special  
Thanks  
To all our Past  
Employees &  
Management*

## Funders



THE UK FUND FOR  
WOMEN AND GIRLS



## Staff

Susan McCrory  
Cathy O'Rawe  
Anne-Marie Keenan  
Nancy Graham  
Marie McGarry  
Áine Fryers  
Teresa Rice  
Bernie Reilly  
Breige Wright  
Ann-Marie Neeson  
Colette Woods  
Shauna Maginn  
Michelle Rainey  
Danielle Morris  
Leigh Aitken  
Alex Templeton  
Elaine Coyle  
Kim McCleary  
Tricia Toner  
Corrina McConnell  
Karleigh McMahon

## Falls Women's Centre/Ionad Ban na bhFál



*Recognising the women who had the foresight to create Falls Women's Centre  
Acknowledging the women who give their time and service to Falls Women's Centre  
Celebrating the women who have come through Falls Women's Centre  
WE ARE POWERFUL, BRILLIANT & BRAVE*

## Chairpersons Report

It has been my privilege to again serve as Chair of Falls Women's Centre over the last year. I am proud to be part of the amazing work and support that is delivered within our community and this report highlights the level of work and commitment shown by the staff, volunteers and management on a daily basis and for that I would like to say a big thank you to everyone. Go raibh mile maith agaibh.

As with the previous couple of years, this year has been one of difficulty and hardship. The cost of living crisis and fuel poverty has impacted on all families and as a Centre we have worked to support those families. It is testament to our community work and commitment that we have continued to provide much needed and valuable services.

Last year saw only the second female to be voted into the highest office in the Executive, yet due to the refusal of one party, the DUP, to serve in the Assembly we have had nine months of blocking and delay. We are aware of the detrimental effect the absence of the Executive has on our health service, education service and within our communities. The issues impacting our community and women in particular cannot be properly addressed without a functioning Executive.

Each year we highlight the impact of violence against women. This year is no exception. The North of Ireland has the joint second highest rate in Europe of women killed as a result of domestic violence. As an organisation that supports women most affected by domestic violence it is important to us as a Centre that we highlight this serious issue within our Annual Report.

Currently, the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy is in the public arena. This new draft strategy proposes a seven-year programme setting out a renewed focus on tackling domestic and sexual abuse. On behalf of Falls Women's Centre, I take this opportunity to urge all women to check with your local women's centres and women's groups to support you in making a response. It is important that we as women have protection from all harm and abuse and that we continue the struggle for a legal system fit for purpose bringing perpetrators to justice and stating NO to violence against women.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to two wonderful women who have passed away since we met last year - Maura Mc Crory and Madeline Quinn. Both women have left their footprint in Falls Women's Centre and both were instrumental in the development and delivery of our vision.

We are in a very exciting period as the Falls Women's Centre enters its fortieth year of existence and we look forward to celebrating that achievement in the year ahead and to building on it over the coming years.

Mary McArdle

## Child-care Department

Our Childcare service continues to be a vital lifeline to women. Our provision of high quality, affordable childcare remains one of the most important services. Childcare now forms an essential service in family life and early childhood education. One of the great benefits is that children quickly become accustomed to a structured routine that helps them to learn a sense of belonging, improves their developmental and emotional skills and helps them integrate into education.

We understand that parents are entrusting their childcare with us on a daily basis, and so we provide the best service possible, from bright spacious rooms, age appropriate equipment and material and healthy foods. Our staff are qualified to the highest level that also includes Special Educational needs (SEN), First Aid and Child Protection. The following training has been completed in the past 18 months;

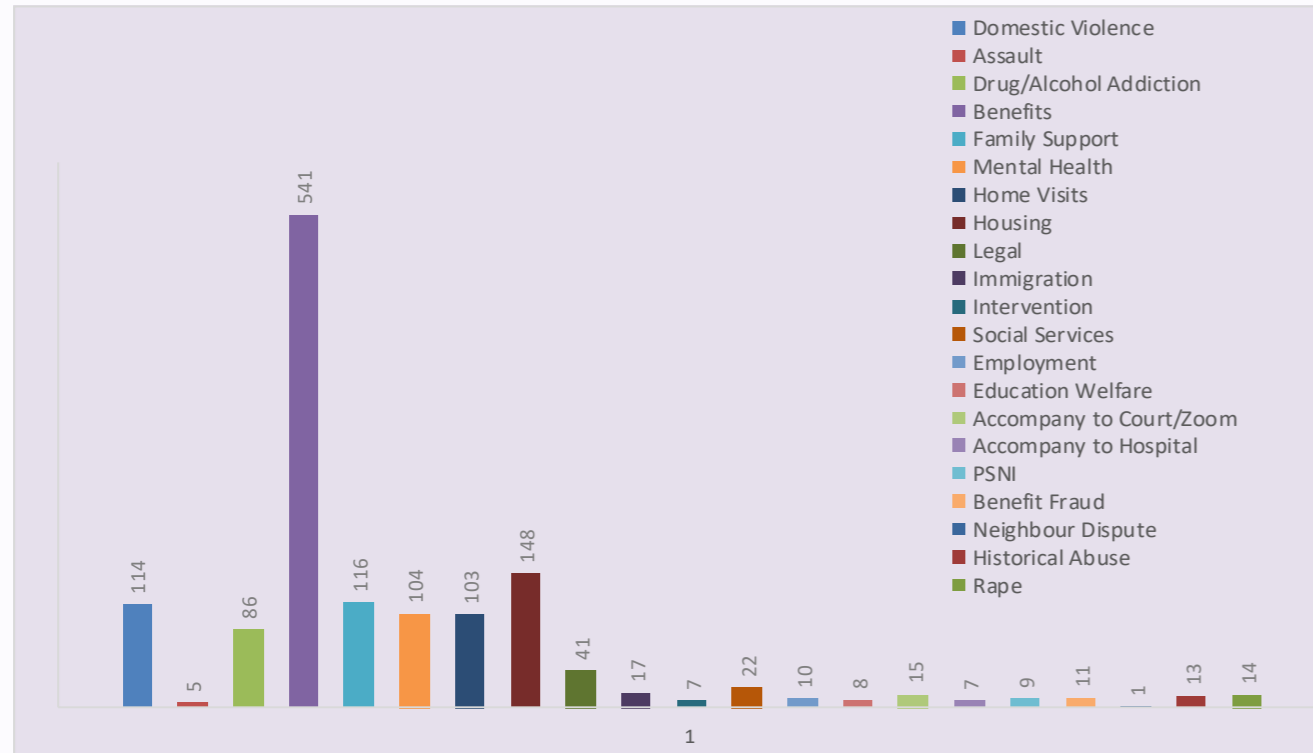
- ◆ **First Aid Paediatric**
- ◆ **Leadership & Management Level 5**
- ◆ **Child Protection**
- ◆ **Health & Social Care Level 3**
- ◆ **Child Protection Designated Officer**



***Your little one is developing their own personality, progressing in their independence and developing their speech. They love to sing songs, listen at story time and play with their friends, and we love to watch as their confidence and social skills grow***



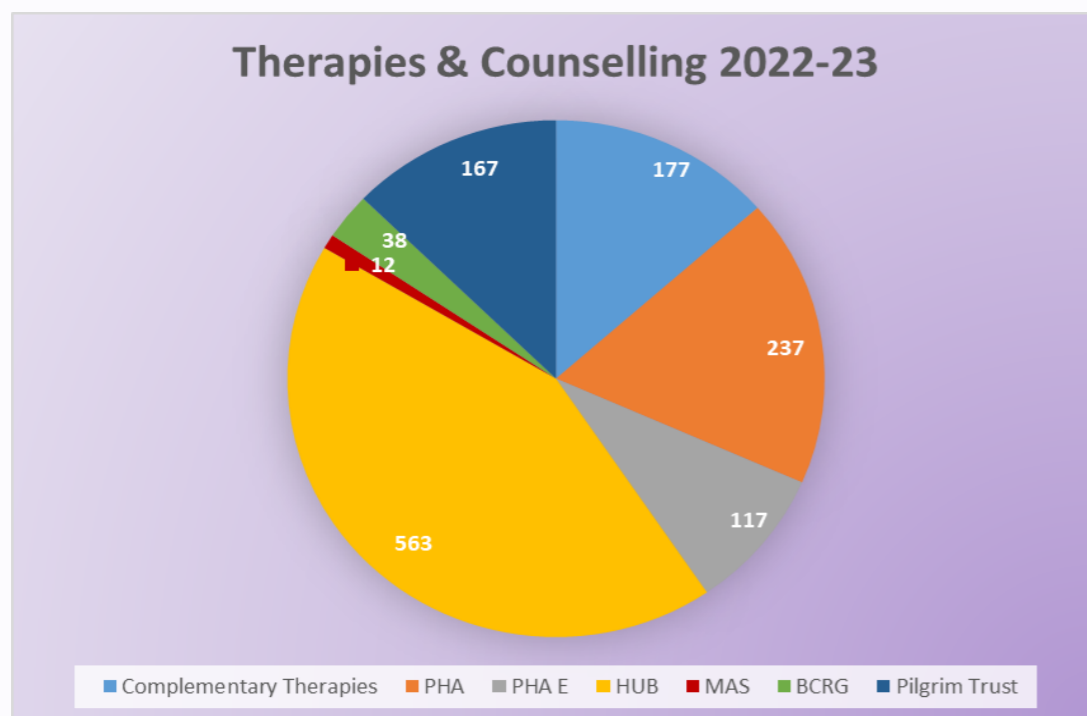
## Advice, Advocacy & Family Support 2022-23



Our Advice, Advocacy & Family Support Department is a lifeline and our core service to many women within our community. As you will see from statistics domestic violence and violence against women and young girls continues to be a serious concern. 133 women received support this year, that's **133 women too many!** We will continue to highlight the crucial changes needed within society and government to tackle this issue and allow women to feel safe.

Another serious issue is the increasing demand for women in support of welfare benefits. This year 541 women received support in applying for various welfare benefits that included Universal credits and PIPs.

Finally, our counselling service has once again proved a much needed and vital service to women. This year we improved our services through additional funding. We are now able to provide counselling to young women aged 16 plus. We have recruited two new counsellors and we are open four evenings a week to provide additional counselling.



## Director's Report

This year is an important year for Falls Women's Centre as we celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> annual report. 40 years of continuing to work supporting women and their families not only in West Belfast but throughout Belfast is testimony to the many women who have passed through the Centre on their own journey and the women who continue to work to support the Centre. Looking back through old reports the word sisterhood, women together, women fighting back highlights the building blocks and the strong foundations of Falls Women's Centre. I believe these words are as relevant today as they were 40 years ago.

This annual report reflects the work carried out by our staff team, managing directors and volunteers. It highlights the need for our women only specific services demonstrating the achievements that women have accomplished within our Training & Education Department and also highlighting serious issues that women experience in their personal lives and the support our Centre provides.

As a women only feminist organisation we cannot overlook our current political climate and not voice our concerns. We have been without a sitting assembly from May 2022. This has been a time when women within our community and throughout our island have faced a cost of living crisis, a major rise in energy costs and food costs that has left families needing extensive support from food banks, fuel vouchers, clothing and household items. As a community grass roots Women's Centre we have worked to provide as much support and help to women and their families as we could. In spite of this political vacuum, reflecting over this past year as a Centre, we have once again succeeded in supporting the most vulnerable women and their families within our communities, whilst also providing opportunities for women to make differences within their lives.

I take this opportunity to thank the management committee for their support throughout this year and the staff and volunteers for the commitment to ensuring we continue to support women in our community.

*Susan McCrory*

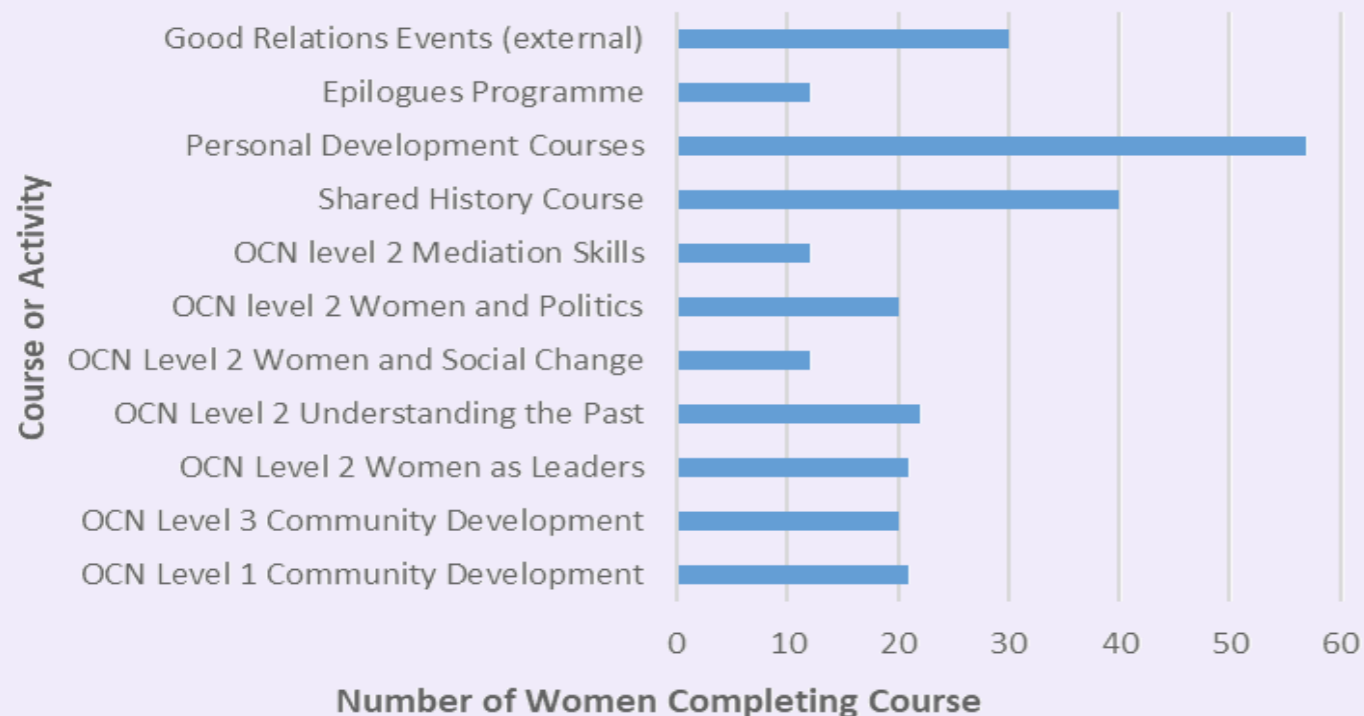
## Training & Education Department

Our Training & Education Department surpassed all expectations in delivering Training and Employment Programmes, Our Good Relations Programmes, the MAS project and our newly established health & well-being project.

### Good Relations

Our Good Relations project empowers women to play an active role in community transformation, women in peace-building and ensuring women have a voice in decision making. Our years of building cross-community partnership work with other women's centres and groups has strengthen women's voices. Our partnership work includes Shankill Women's Centre, Glenbank Women's Group, Community Relations Forum, Ballybeen Women's Centre, Greenway Women's Centre. This year we made new connections with Forthriver Women's Group. Our hope is that we will continue to build and grow in solidarity. Our suite of accredited courses such as: OCN Level 2 Women and Social Change, community development level 2 & 3, Women in Political life have given women the opportunity to engage and learn.

### Women in Peacebuilding Project Jan 2022 - Jan 2023



Our continuing work to ensure women from both communities are involved in the Constitutional Conversation' has continued to grow. Women took part in the "Gendering Constitutional Conversation" research undertaken by Ulster University.

Epilogues programme continues to be one of our core programmes delivered by Gaslight in partnership with Shankill Women's Centre and Newtownabbey Forum. It is an intensive residential programme which places the NI conflict in a framework informed by human rights and social justice. We have worked with bloody Sunday Trust to learn and understand the 'The Derry Model' as a model for progress and meaningful change. We hope to continue to bring women forward ensuring opportunities for engagement in building peace.

## Young Women's Groups

This year we were delighted to deliver programmes in the centre to our young women aged 12 years to 18 years. To date 90 young women have engaged in our project. As well as delivering a wide range of programmes suitable to the young women we were able to source additional funding that enabled the following programmes and building of partnerships:

**GLOW, Star Neighbourhood, and Glengormley Youth Club** securing our annual T:BUC funding for an innovative Autumn/Winter programme. The programme aimed at building good relations between young people.

**Northern Ireland Youth Forum** delivering a women's empowerment programme to young women aged 18 to 25. Within this programme we covered issues such as mental and physical wellbeing, violence against women and girls and feminism. We also attended the Femfest conference in Dublin.

**Belfast City Council Peace IV - 'Our Shared City'** programme. This programme provided space for young women from the Travelling community to engage with other young settled women to explore culture and heritage and share their experiences of living within their communities, this resulted in a photographic exhibition and booklet "Understanding each other cultures, traditions and history". Our photographic exhibition is an excellent piece of art from the young women and holds pride of place within our Centre.

**Pilgrim Trust Young Women's Mental Health** this funding was attained to offer young women aged 16yrs-25yrs and most affected by poor mental health counselling services and alternative therapies.

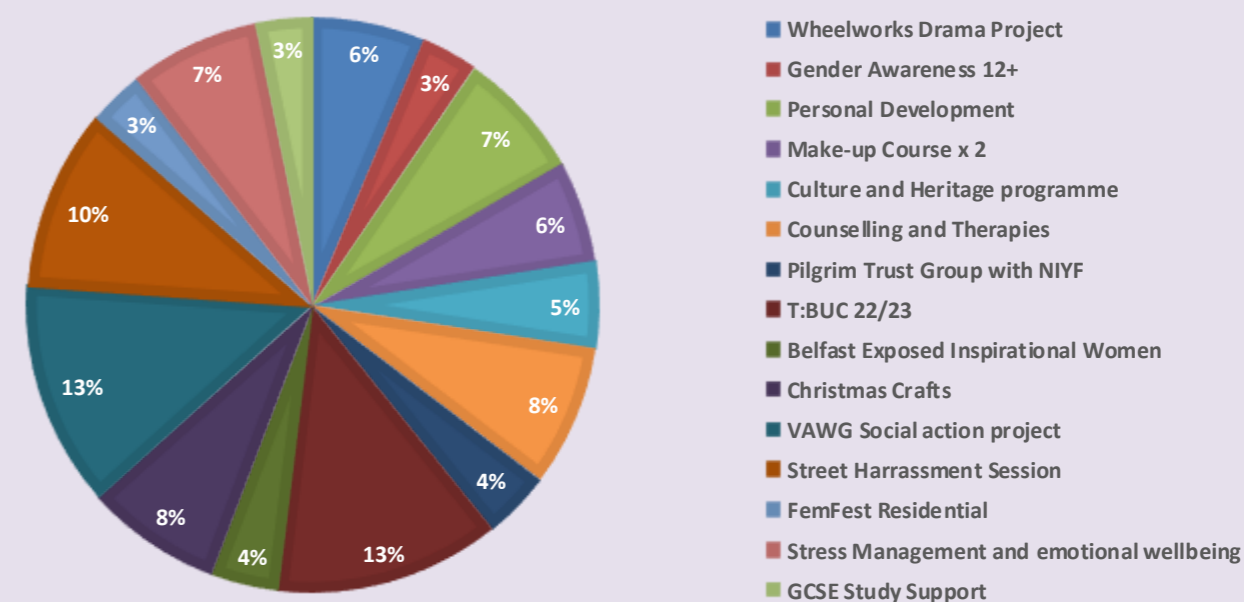
**Shankill Womens Centre** delivered OCN level 1 in Life-skills & Parenting to a group of 10 young women. We facilitated programmes on mental health awareness, gender awareness and sexual health.

Our programmes are based on the expressed needs of the young women. We worked with GIGA Training who facilitated a graphic design programme to produce posters that highlight violence against women and girls. Nexus delivered their Street Harassment session, through which the young women learned more about types of violence, sexual assault and consent.

Throughout the year we provided opportunities for the young women to participate in some fun programmes, make-up training, nail courses crafting, baking and outdoor activities.

Finally, this year also saw the return of Residential for the young women; we facilitated three residencials to the great delight of the young women participating.

### ATTENDANCE RECORD FOR YEAR JAN 22 - JAN 23



## Events 2022-23

Our Good Relations Féile Event 2022 “No Woman left behind” has continually ensured local women have a voice in peace-building and are involved in creating a new and shared future. We had guests speakers from WRDA, Women’s Feminist Network, and Sinn Fein MLA Liz Miskimmons. The event was well attended.



International Women’s Day 2022 with a round-table event with over 60 women attending. Our guest speaker Jeanie from Trócaire discussed on ‘Women’s Rights, Human Rights’ as a global issue.

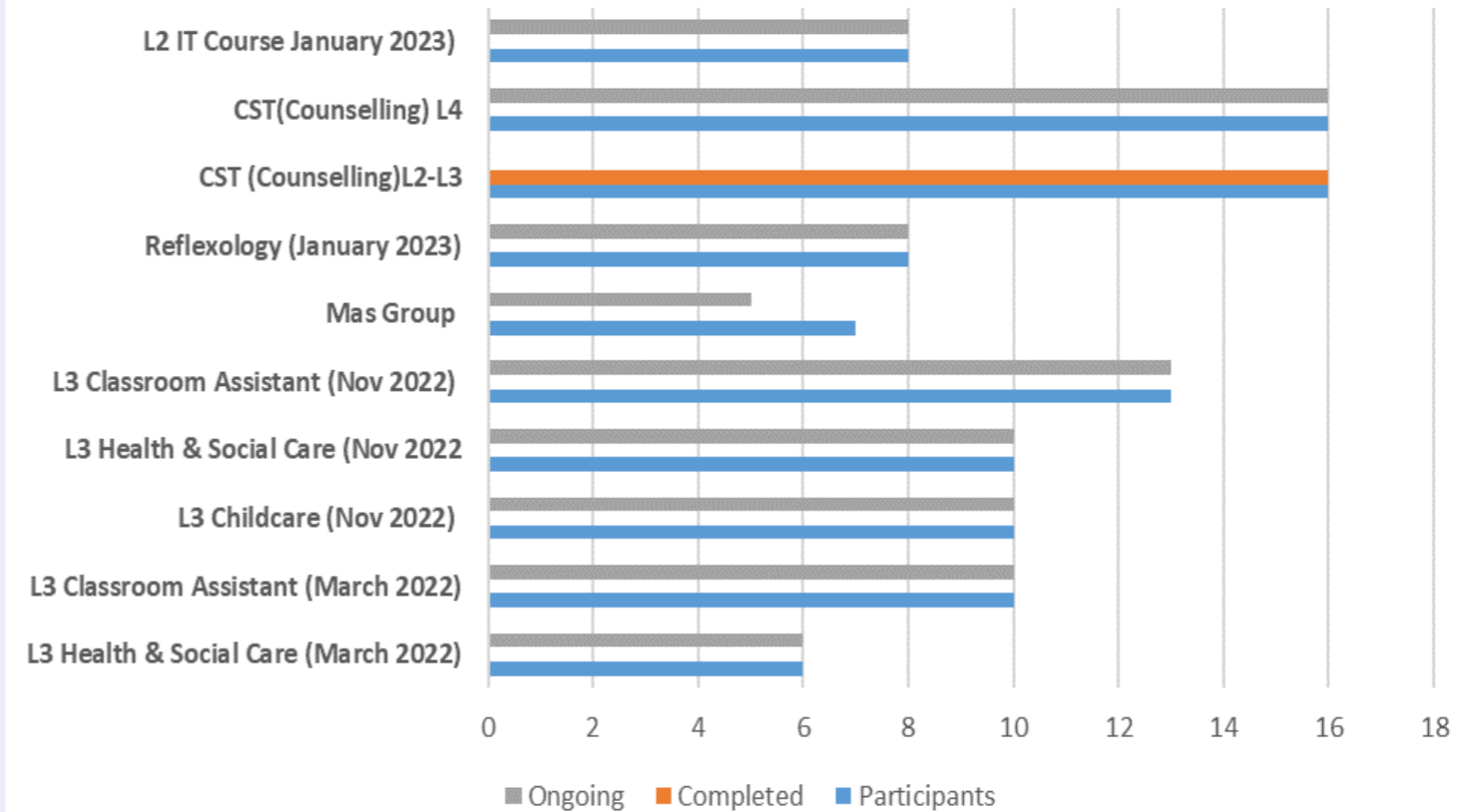


Our Mas Project has supported young mothers throughout the year. Our young women attended and spoke at the 1<sup>st</sup> Women’s Parliament NI in Stormont on Perinatal mental health and the importance of maternal advocacy and support. Our weekly drop in and programmes have become a vital life line to young mothers.

Our annual social event for Good Relations Week in conjunction with Shankill Women’s Centre and Glengormley women’s Group, featured traditional music from both communities, dancing and sharing traditions.



## Employability Project 2022-23



Our Training and Employment courses this year, included level 2 & 3 Counselling Certificate, Level 4 Diploma in counselling, Health & Social Care level 3, Childcare level 3 and Teaching Assistant level 3. Our beauty and business enabled young women to learn beauty skills such as nails, eyebrows and make-up alongside learning to set up your own business. These courses have supported women find employment, become self-employed or gain promotion within their current jobs.

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