

Magherafelt Women's Group Limited

Company Limited by Guarantee

Directors' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2023

Structure, governance and management

Magherafelt Women's Group Ltd is a company limited by guarantee and accepted as charitable by HMRC. The company is also a registered charity with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under Charity number 103511. The company was incorporated on 21 December 2001. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the company, and is governed by its Articles of Association. The liability of members is limited in that every member of the company undertakes to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 in the event of the company being wound up.

Recruitment and Appointment of Directors

The charity Trustees are also Directors of the company. Mrs Kristal Olphert was appointed director on 1 August 2022.

Organisation Structure

The Board consists of six Trustees who administer the Charity and meet monthly. The board has appointed a centre manager Bernie O'Neill.

Objectives and activities

The aim of Magherafelt Women's Group Ltd is to relieve poverty, to advance education and to protect health and in particular to provide in Magherafelt and surrounding district (the area of benefit) facilities in the interests of social welfare for the education, recreation and leisure time occupation of women who by reason of social or economic circumstances have needed such facilities. Magherafelt Women's Group is a non-profit organisation but its model includes a degree of cost recovery by offering services to various public organisations and private individuals via Kidz Lodge childcare and Learning Lodge training centre. There are no shareholders and all profits reinvested for the benefits of the community. Through its structure Kidz Lodge works to address the needs of local disadvantaged and working families in the community by providing flexible affordable accessible high quality Summer Scheme, Daycare and Afterschool facilities delivered by highly qualified and caring staff in a safe nurturing environment.

Achievements and performance

The 2022-2023 was another challenging year for the staff of MWG and Kidz Lodge Childcare although the impact of Covid-19 lessened as the year progressed.

Kidz Lodge had another successful year, providing daycare to an average of 53 0-4 year old children each week and after-school care to 39 4-11 year olds.

The centre management was disappointed however that it was not possible to re-open the baby room, despite a waiting list for places, because of problems in attracting suitable staff. Recruitment efforts continue at year end.

A highlight of the year was the achievement in March 2023 of a Gold Award from Early Years as a Centre of Excellence. Kidz Lodge became the first Mid-Ulster childcare facility to achieve this prestigious quality award following a rigorous inspection process. This is a notable achievement and a testament to the dedication and hard work of Kidz Lodge management and staff.

While Covid-19 guidelines were relaxed during the year, staff were mindful that the virus was still in circulation and continued to maintain strict hygiene protocols to minimise avoidable infection and absence.

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Another constraint was the continued increase in overhead costs which required ongoing attention. Childcare fees were increased in line with inflation and budgets were managed carefully while ensuring that standards were not compromised.

Operations in the women's group returned to a degree of normality as Covid rules were relaxed. MWG continued to collaborate with the NI Rural Women's Network (NIRWN) to deliver employability and personal development activities under the Women Breaking Barriers pilot initiative. Courses facilitated included: Speech Confidence; Self Care for Success; Get Creative Finances; Get Creative Self-Employment; Living in Flow; Wellbeing in Focus Photography; Level 2 Counselling; Conflict and Mediation Skills. Feedback from participants was very positive and, at year end, the WBB partners were still awaiting confirmation of future funding but were hopeful that this delivery could resume in 2023-24.

Other activities offered during the year were mainly related to wellbeing and creative crafts and included the following:

Wellbeing: Menopause programme; Breast Screening Awareness programme; Confidence building course; Yoga.

Crafts: Autumn wreath making and wall hanging with loom weaving; Christmas creative crafts – cards, gifts, wreaths, table arrangements; Spring box frame workshop and decorative wall.

There were one-off activities to address women's isolation and boost confidence and the group was able to host a coffee morning to mark International Women's Day in March for the first time in several years. A four week Journaling programme was facilitated for CWSAN (Cookstown & Western Shores Area Network); MWG participated in the Warm Spaces initiative, which was a response to the cost of living crisis, during the winter months; and Stay and Play sessions for mums and tots were provided and proved very popular.

MWG staff continued to offer support to women by sharing information on social media and linking with other organisations, and through direct communication with women on our mailing lists. Rooms continued to be made available for hire, with Sure Start using two rooms and other spaces available at a competitive rate.

In Autumn, the Board and centre management engaged Blue Moss consultants to assist with a strategic review of operations and to develop a new strategic plan. This work reflected the current challenging funding environment and is ongoing at year end.

The Board of Magherafelt Women's Group is very grateful to our funders for their ongoing support – core funder, DfC Community Investment Fund; Early Years Pathway Fund; Department of Education Bright Start Fund; Mid Ulster District Council and NI Housing Executive.

The Board thank the management team and all the staff for their dedication during the past year and thank the Kidz Lodge parents for their cooperation and support. The Board also thank long serving chair, Anne Forde, who stepped down as chair at the end of the business year.

Board and staff look forward to progressing plans which result from the ongoing strategic review and, despite acknowledged challenges, are optimistic about the coming year.