

Magherafelt Women's Group Limited

Company Limited by Guarantee

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

Year ended 31 March 2024

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 Hannah Murray was appointed director on 13 November 2023

Organisation Structure

The Board consists of seven 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. Though 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

2023-24 was another busy and successful year for Magherafelt Women's Group and Kidz Lodge Childcare.

Kidz Lodge provided day care 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 remain disappointed however that it was not possible to re-open the baby room, despite a waiting list for places, because of ongoing problems in attracting suitable staff. Recruitment efforts continue at year end in earnest.

Financial viability for childcare businesses also continues to be an ongoing challenge, with sustained increases in overhead costs affecting all businesses, including Kidz Lodge. The Board had to reluctantly decide to increase childcare fees in line with inflation despite being aware that some parents who use our services may not be receiving similar salary increases. At year end we are waiting for more information (we have since received information) on potential support from the NI Executive for the childcare sector. We have now received information from NICSS on the extra 15% off the day rate for children up to P1 so this will be reflected in the September invoices for parents who have signed up to it. Sadly this does not cover older children or those on childcare vouchers though so there is still work to be done to help parents and providers. Centre Management have undergone training in order to recoup the 15% from NICSS.

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Kidz lodge is extremely proud of becoming a fully accredited centre achieving Gold in the Early Years Centre of Excellence from the Early Years organisation of Northern Ireland. The work and determination the staff displayed in achieving this standard was outstanding, especially our Centre Manager Bernie O'Neill.

Many core activities offered by MWG continued during the year but there was also an expansion of activities aimed at attracting new service users and meeting the needs identified in surveys and user feedback.

New courses and activities included: Better Sleep for your Child; Managing Anxiety in Children; Autism Awareness Training; Understanding Supporting Behaviour Workshop; Children's Occupational Therapy Sensory Regulation; Parents First aid Course and Farm Families First Aid.

Employability support included an information session with Network Personnel Growth Workshop and the Team from Jobs and benefits. We continued our collaboration with the NI Rural Women's Network (NIRWN) under the Women Breaking Barriers initiative, offering an Introduction to Holistic Therapies for women who may be interested in training or self-employment in those areas.

In response to demand, other activities offered during the year were mainly related to wellbeing and creative crafts and included the following:

Wellbeing: Dementia Talk; Money Management; Skincare Masterclass; First Steps out of Overwhelm; Mindfulness; Stress Management; Winter Wellbeing Programme; Healthy Eating; Personal Development; Body Shop Pamper Morning; Yoga; Pilates and chair based activities.
Crafts: Christmas Box Frame; Christmas Wreath Making; Christmas Bamboo Hoop; Acrylic Stained Painting; Fresh Flower Arranging; Spring Door Wreath and Candle Making Workshop.
There was also an event to mark International Rual Women's Day in October. We had a lovely session with personal development coach and some sweet treats to enjoy. The women came together to take some time for themselves and met new friends which help support health and wellbeing.

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.

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, Childcare Partnership 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 continued support.