

FOOTPRINTS WOMENS CENTRE

DIRECTORS' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

The directors present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note to the financial statements and comply with the charity's Articles of Association, the Companies Act 2006 and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)".

Chair's Report

Economic crises tend to hit women hardest and the current Cost-of-Living Crisis is no different. Footprints provides a trusted, local space for women and families to access help and support, in addressing financial vulnerability and poverty in ways that work best for them.

Over this past year the situation for the women in our communities has been dire, with rising levels of debt, poverty and destitution. The development of strategies that address these issues affecting our communities; and ensuring the needs of women experiencing disadvantage are needed more than ever.

As the cost-of-living crisis deepens, finding the balance between service delivery and sustainability has become even more of a challenge as we strive to continue to provide the specialist support required. Government needs to provide a long-term sustainable funding model, recognising the significant return on investment Women's Centres provide, enabling them to continue and develop the vital services they provide.

Times of crisis often require new ways of thinking and working, and Footprints is recognised as an organisation whose innovative practices affect policy and change. Over the past year the centre and its services have been visited by government departments, local councils, trusts, funders and local and global organisations, viewing our models and in effecting future change.

We have been recognised across the sectors for our work in supporting communities and leading practice including the Guardian and Observer charity appeal 2022, Green Flag Award 2022, Womens Leadership and were one of 6 finalists listed by Belfast Chamber, showcasing the strength of Belfast's Social Enterprise community.

Footprints Board and management have prioritised staff health and well-being, signing up as an Accredited Living Wage Employer, demonstrating our commitment as a responsible employer.

For those of you who are not already aware Isobel Loughran will be retiring from her role as Chief Executive and she wishes to thank the staff, board and the many organisations and individuals who have supported her in leading this amazing and unique organisation in which she has been involved with over the past thirty years.

Footprints, I believe, will continue to promote best practice and quality standards relating to women's issues; and be an advocate for the delivery and sustainability of services to meet the needs of women in Colin. I wish it all the very best in its future work.

Incoming CEO Statement

I am delighted to be given the opportunity to include a short statement this year's report, having taken up post in mid-June 2023. Over the coming months I hope to work alongside our board of trustees and other stakeholders to undertake a period of strategic review. Footprints is a strong and resilient organisation that has gone through periods of change which have brought both challenges and opportunities. The organisation's innovative approach, agility to respond, resilience and commitment to the sector and community have resulted in positive change and I hope this new chapter will allow for continued growth and increased positive impact on lives.

I look forward to working alongside the dedicated team at Footprints, collaborating with others and eagerly anticipate what the future holds in terms of realising the aspirations and vision of this excellent and fundamental organisation.

FOOTPRINTS WOMENS CENTRE

DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

Achievements and performance

The purposes of the charity are:

- a. The promotion for the public benefit of urban regeneration in the Colin area and the surrounding catchment areas in Belfast and Lisburn (the “area of benefit”), an area of social and economic deprivation, by all or any of the following means:
 - i. the relief of poverty in such ways as may be thought fit.
 - i. the relief of unemployment among women in such ways as may be thought fit, including assistance to find employment.
 - ii. the advancement of education, training or retraining and providing unemployed women with work experience.
 - iii. the creation of training and employment opportunities for women by the provision of workspace, buildings and/or land for use on favourable terms.
 - iv. the provision of recreational facilities for women or those who by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disablement, poverty or social and economic circumstances, have need of such facilities.
 - v. The preservation and protection of health of women and the provision of childcare.
- b. To provide encouragement and practical support services to existing and new women’s groups in the area of benefit so as to increase their efficiency and effectiveness in achieving their charitable aims.
- c. To develop the capacity and skills of women in the area of benefit in such a way that they are better able to identify, and help meet, their needs and to participate more fully in society.
- d. To promote social inclusion, equality of opportunity and good relations across all diversity strands, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion and disability and to encourage diversity.

The vision that shapes our annual activities is, to enable women and children to grow to ensure their voices are heard and that they take their rightful place in a just and equal society. The charity also has general aims relating to each key area of activity all of which link to the charity’s purpose.

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the directors have considered the Charity Commission’s guidance on public benefit, including the guidance ‘public benefit: running a charity (PB2)’.

Footprints Women’s Centre relies on grants and the income generated through the services delivered by Footprints Trading Limited. We strive to provide open access to all services, programmes, activities and projects, enabling women and children to reach their full potential.

We endeavour to encourage all women and children within the Colin community to actively engage and participate within Footprints at whatever level is appropriate for them.

FOOTPRINTS WOMENS CENTRE

DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

The strategies employed to achieve the charity's aims and objectives are to:

- Lobby and work to influence policy to support better services for women and children.
- Generate income through a social enterprise model that will enable us to develop autonomously and to sustain the services delivered within Footprints Women's Centre.
- Continue to build upon our existing early intervention programmes responding to emerging need.
- Continue to champion the case for social justice as it affects the lives of women and children.

Putting these strategies into action we have 5 key areas of activity which are: Support Services; Children's Services, Training and Education, Sustainable Living and Women's Empowerment.

Within each key area of activity we deliver a range of programmes, services and projects.

Support Services

Footprints provides the only 'open door' crisis intervention services in the Colin Community for women. The daily demand for the service, demonstrates the overwhelming need that exists within the community for vital support services.

Footprints works with MARAC, South Eastern Area Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership, Womens Aid and partnership in ensuring that local services meets the needs and concerns of the women and children in the communities we serve.

Footprints Support team provide must needed gendered support to women and families in the Colin area during the cost-of-living crisis. Services include weekly drop-in groups including: Alcohol recovery, older women's groups; a 1:1 support service for women experiencing domestic violence; advocacy; referral to specialist agencies; stress management techniques; assist suicide first aid contact point and; domestic violence awareness raising programmes. We have also held 'pop up' support service sessions in community venues including local hostels, providing group and one to one support to women and families.

Family support continues to provide 1-1 support, CHAMPS (Children Healing through Art, Movement, Play and Smiles), MAS's (Maternal Advocacy and Support) programme, mums and tots, and bespoke programmes to support parents and families. Our Young Girls Group continues to provide gendered support and leadership capacity building for young girls in the area.

Partnerships and collaborations with local and wider networks include: Groundworks, STEMNI, RSPB, Belfast Harbour Commission, developing partnerships and effective use of resources in bringing new and innovative projects to women and families in Colin.

All of this work is delivered by a highly skilled team who bring specialist skills and experience ensuring that services continue to meet the diverse range of needs of the women and families in the area. We have developed positive working relationships with key agencies, including Social Services, Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid, PSNI, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference, NIHE, Colin Neighbourhood Partnership, Sally Gardens and Colin Surestart, ensuring access to a wide range of services is promoted and developed.

FOOTPRINTS WOMENS CENTRE

DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

Children's Services

Children's services remain a vital resource to women in Colin in accessing employment, training, volunteering, and respite support. During this cost of living crisis we provide subsidised daycare provision and all children accessing our services are provided with health nutritious meals and snacks, cooked onsite in our 5 star rated kitchen and free nappies and wipes as well as access to all Footprints on-site support services.

Children have daily access to our Green Flag Award winning gardens and outdoor spaces, play resources, sensory gardens, wildflower meadow and Eco Barn, in promoting and supporting positive health and wellbeing. We are also a registered NI Forest School, recognising our children's contact with nature to be extremely important from an early age

Our Daycare facility continues to deliver affordable and flexible childcare to working parents and women in full and part time education/training. In addition, we continue to deliver day-care for childcare respite, providing childcare places for children at risk of going into care and families in need of support. The Centre also takes emergency social services referrals. Without this vital service many children would be left in unstable circumstances in relation to family life and environment. We have introduced food tasting sessions for the children, facilitated by Educator Chef Marie Anne Daly, as well as Yoga, Dance and Mindfulness in promoting their health and well being

Our annual South Eastern Trust inspection was carried out in October 2022 and I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the childcare staff for their incredible teamwork. The excellent results of this report would not be possible without them. We would also like to thank our parents for their positive comments and reviews. We are immensely proud to be so highly rated and receive such positive feedback from parents using our services.

Our services for 5-16 year olds continues to provide unique and innovative learning programmes and activities led by our highly qualified and experience staff. The waiting lists and feedback from the programmes highlight the commitment from the staff who provide daily programmes, activities and visits and summer scheme.

Training and Education / Women's Empowerment

Our Training and empowerment programmes continue to provide high quality capacity building programmes for women in a safe and welcoming space. The wide range of accredited and non-accredited programmes on offer reflect Footprints responsiveness to member's surveys and consultations.

Our Community Kitchen/Cookery School has delivered a range of skill's based accredited programmes in supporting women's employment opportunities and work and volunteering opportunities.

Health and Well-being remain a core part of our programme delivery and a well-being week was held as part of our International Women's Day celebrations. Workshops, therapies and information sessions supporting women's physical and mental well-being were delivered in both our indoor and outdoor spaces.

Footprints Good Relations work remains part of the centre core services and our Syrian women's group continues to develop and grow. Members meet weekly to share food and support and take part in conversational English classes.

FOOTPRINTS WOMENS CENTRE

DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

Sustainable Living Project

The focus for Sustainable Living this year was to consolidate the current service provision of Social Supermarket, Children's food and environmental projects as we worked towards the launch of our newest venture; Footprints Cookery School.

Footprints Social Supermarket was pivotal in responding to increasing levels of need as the cost of living crisis deepened. We gratefully acknowledge the continuation funding from DfC 's Pilot Social Supermarket Project which enabled Footprints to meet the high levels of need for food support within the community. This funding also provided access to Wrap around Support Services, developing skills and pathways for members to progress into volunteering and employment.

The value and effectiveness of this model of food support and skills development has been recognised and championed by a range of sponsors including Glenwood Enterprise Ltd, James Brown & Sons, Apex Housing and private donors. Their contributions, alongside DfC core funding, Fareshare's surplus food provision, Bryson Cost of Living Emergency Relief Initiative and Urban Villages' Keeping Warm-Staying Safe funding award ensured Footprints was a warm, welcoming space throughout a difficult winter.

We also gratefully acknowledge National Lottery Community Funds award to Footprints of a 3 year People & Communities grant. This funding has enabled Footprints to implement our strategic vision of opening a Cookery School in 2022 and establishing a new social enterprise to create an additional income stream in 2023.

The refurbished Community Kitchen was officially opened in August 2022 and the first programmes in the Cookery School commenced in September.

Within 6 months over 300 women and children had participated in a range of Social Cook programmes led by Nicola Foster, Footprints Food Skills Trainer. As Nicola embarked on this role within Footprints she has received valuable mentoring and support through the Elevate Community Mentoring & Grants Programme.

During this period of time we were particularly delighted to welcome P4 children from St Kieran's Primary School into the Community Kitchen for a 'Food is Fun' programme and a special congratulations to the 14 women who achieved OCN Hospitality Skills accreditation, including 8 of our Syrian sisters.

Improving health and wellbeing through nutrition, alongside the pleasure of cooking and sharing experiences together are core objectives of the Cookery School's programmes. Members are encouraged to pick produce to use in the cookery classes from Footprints Garden allotments and orchard. A range of Social Grow programmes have been developed to connect with our natural environment and promote therapeutic horticulture.

Footprints journey towards building a sustainable community continues and we were delighted to retain the Green Flag Community site award 2022/23 and to facilitate for the first time, a Repair Café at Footprints in Jan 2023.

The environmental impact of textiles was identified by our membership as a concern. Learning that clothing and footwear going to landfill, equates to 10% of global green house gas emissions, prompted us to refit an underused office in the Centre into a dedicated space to promote the 'Repair & Share' of preloved clothing. We look forward to developing a range of Social Fashion programmes throughout the next year to further our Sustainable Living objectives.

Financial review

The results for the period are as set out on pages 14 to 37. The charity returned net incoming resources of £ 57,719 (2022 - £171,552) of which there were unrestricted net incoming resources of £86,818 and restricted net outgoing resources of £29,099. At 31 March 2023, the level of unrestricted reserves held was £665,715 (2022 - £578,897).

The Directors have set aside £209,522 (2022 - £209,522) out of unrestricted funds in relation to Core Activities, Business Reserves, Governance Costs and Programme Costs.

FOOTPRINTS WOMENS CENTRE

DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

Reserves policy

Footprints maintain a prudent level of reserves to enable the organisation to manage financial risk and deliver on our commitments.

The organisation is currently working to meet unprecedented challenges created by the cost of living crises. This has had a major impact on women and families we work with and created unidentified and rising levels of need. The Board has unrestricted general and unrestricted designated funds to ensure sustainability and growth of our support services, investing in the maintenance and development of current and future FWC Childcare and Food services projects over the next twelve months. We remain committed to furthering our strategic aims and goals in meeting community need.

The Directors consider that designated reserves should be the equivalent of 9 month's operating costs, calculated and reviewed annually. Reserves at this level will ensure that, in the event of a significant drop in funding, they will be able to continue the charity's current activities while consideration is given to ways in which additional funds may be raised. This level of reserves has been maintained throughout the year.

The charitable company will continue to monitor compliance with this policy on a regular basis and the Board will review the appropriateness of the policy annually.

Structure, governance and management

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by its memorandum and articles of association.

The directors who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Ms M Boyle (Resigned 8 December 2022)

Ms N Braniff (Resigned 8 December 2022)

Ms U Carberry

Ms A Fisher

Mrs S Glymond

Ms R Holmes

Ms M McNeill

Ms D Atkinson

Ms R Denvir

Ms S Lavery

Mrs E Duffy (Appointed 21 March 2023)

Mrs B Donaghy (Appointed 21 March 2023)

New directors are appointed by the members of the charity at the annual general meeting.

Footprints Women's Centre is managed by a voluntary Board of Directors who are responsible for both the management of the charity and the trading arm owned by the charity, Footprints Trading Ltd. The Board of Directors meet monthly to oversee the management of the Centre. A finance and personnel sub-committee has been established. These groups meet monthly. There is a separate Board for the trading company and this Board meets bi-monthly.

The Board of Directors employs a Centre Director who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the organisation. The Board of Directors conducts bi-annual reviews of the strategic plan, and at the same time reviews Board performance. Policies and procedures are reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis.

The charity receives an annual gift aid donation from its trading subsidiary Footprints Trading Ltd. Footprints Trading Ltd run a number of charitable activities which are also in pursuit of the charitable objectives of Footprints Womens Centre.

FOOTPRINTS WOMENS CENTRE

DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

Key management personnel

The directors consider the board of directors, and the senior management team to comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing and controlling, running and operating the organisation on a day to day basis. All directors give of their time freely and no director received remuneration in the year.

The pay of the senior staff is benchmarked against NJC Scales.

Statement of directors' responsibilities

The directors, who also act as trustees for the charitable activities of Footprints Womens Centre, are responsible for preparing the Directors' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company Law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The directors are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Auditor

In accordance with the company's articles, a resolution proposing that GMcG LISBURN be reappointed as auditor of the company will be put at a General Meeting.

Disclosure of information to auditor

Each of the directors has confirmed that there is no information of which they are aware which is relevant to the audit, but of which the auditor is unaware. They have further confirmed that they have taken appropriate steps to identify such relevant information and to establish that the auditor is aware of such information.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provision applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

The directors' report was approved by the Board of Directors.

Ms A Fisher
Director

28 November 2023