

# FOOTPRINTS WOMENS CENTRE

## DIRECTORS' REPORT

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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The directors present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 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).

#### Chief Executive's Report

2023/24 has been a successful and also challenging year for Footprints Women's Centre and for the women's and community and voluntary sectors overall. We continue to provide essential services for women and girls in the Colin area and over the year we have successfully maintained and developed new partnerships to support our work and increase the impact of what we deliver.

However, there remains significant challenges for communities, having emerged from the pandemic we unfortunately continue to navigate the cost-of-living crisis. These major events have long term consequences which continue to be felt and this is likely to be the case for years to come. From research carried out it is evident there is a gendered impact of these events and this is evidenced through increasing demand for some services. We have experienced an increase in the need for 1:1 support over the last year and with increasing numbers of women reporting domestic abuse we very much look forward to the adoption and roll out of the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls strategy and the associated funding, that we hope can go beyond raising awareness of domestic abuse.

As an organisation we are developing a new strategic plan for the next three-year period and seek to focus on a number of priorities that we believe will guide us clearly towards our vision, delivering positive outcomes that meets the needs of the women and their families in the Colin area. We also hope the plan can support growth for Footprints as an organisation. We believe more than ever that we are in a new chapter, whereby the complexity of need is greater and yet the external market we operate within is experiencing decreasing levels of intervention, increasing overheads, a labour crisis that has meant new and innovative ways of recruiting to attract staff into some roles and a general feeling of unrest as governments struggle to stabilise.

Aside from all the challenges there remains significant hope. The third sector has no shortage of innovative people working and volunteering within it and Footprints is no exception; with a talented workforce who remain committed to ongoing development and learning, a healthy pool of amazing volunteers who give of their time and skills so generously and with much collaborative working with others the people power is well and truly evident. We hope to harness the dedication further and seek new opportunities to grow our social enterprises over the coming year, including our new Danu Street Kitchen as well as exploring some other new opportunities.

I have witnessed so many glimmers since I took up post in June 2023 it would be impossible to try and pinpoint a particular highlight or detail any one success. I am continually impressed by the organisation and I am in no doubt that our people are what make Footprints the successful and excellent organisation it is. There has been a history of strong leadership from the board and senior team and this has ensured Footprints has been at the forefront of many exciting and groundbreaking initiatives. I would like to thank the outgoing Chief Executive, Isobel Loughran for her thorough handover, as well as her kindness and patience. I would also like to thank my board of directors for their commitment to the mission and vision of the organisation, their dedication to leading with excellence and for simply being a thoroughly inspirational group of women who will settle for nothing but complete professionalism and make decisions with complete discernment.

I have had the joy to become part of the team and encouraged by the year behind us and I am excited for the one ahead. There is much work to be done and as a team we are ready to embrace it!

# FOOTPRINTS WOMENS CENTRE

## DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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### 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 2024

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#### 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.

#### 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 Support team continues to provide much needed gendered support to women and families in the Colin area. Services include weekly drop-in groups including: Alcohol recovery, older women's groups, a 1:1 support service for women experiencing domestic abuse, advocacy, referral to specialist agencies, stress management techniques, assist suicide first aid contact point and domestic abuse awareness raising programmes. We have hosted a one stop shop, welcoming partner organisations into the centre for advice and guidance.

Family support continues to provide 1-1 support, CHAMPS (Children Healing through Art, Movement, Play and Smiles) 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 includes, Groundworks, STEMNI, RSPB, Belfast Harbour Commission, NSPCC, Playboard NI.

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.

#### Children's Services

Children's services remain a vital resource to women in Colin in accessing employment, training, volunteering, and respite support.

Children have daily access to our Green flag Award winning gardens and outdoor spaces, play resources and sensory gardens 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 daycare 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.

# FOOTPRINTS WOMENS CENTRE

## DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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Our annual inspection was carried out in December 2023 by South Eastern Trust's Early Years Service, who undertake the registration and inspection of day care provision in the Trust area. We are very pleased to report we received an excellent result with minimal recommendations. Our staff team work hard to maintain high standards which are demonstrated through excellent inspection results each year and high levels of satisfaction from our parent feedback surveys also.

Our services for 5-16 year olds continues to provide unique and innovative learning programmes and activities led by our highly qualified and experienced staff. The waiting lists and feedback from the programmes highlight the commitment from the staff who provide daily programmes, activities and visits and also a 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. We have experienced a change in our funding of our training and education programmes and as such have re-designed the programme, consulting with women as to what they feel would be beneficial to support their learning and development. We have been part of the Women Breaking Barriers programme, which has been delivered through Women's Support Network, partnering with the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA). The programme is funded by the UK government's Shared Prosperity Fund and this has experienced some changes due to a change in government. We hope this initial project has supported learning for a second phase and that funding can be granted to further support the work that has commenced under the programme, which seeks to work with women who are considered economically inactive.

We are extremely privileged to be working alongside a philanthropist who has granted funding for an Essential Skills programme to support women who wishes to upskill to help them either secure employment or to retrain for a new career. This programme will commence in the next academic year and we look forward to developing this pilot programme which we hope will transform the lives of the women who embark upon the programme. We are grateful to the funder, who is committed to working alongside us to drive change and ensure maximum impact across a range of priorities.

Our Community Kitchen/Cookery School has delivered a range of skills based accredited programmes in supporting women's employment opportunities and work and volunteering opportunities. Over the coming year we are keen to grow the offering within our community kitchen and already have the wheels in motion to work with new partners in this setting.

Health and Wellbeing remains a priority within our programme recognising the immense value in carrying out work within the centre that supports not only awareness, but supports a preventative model of work, particularly in relation to mental health.

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

# FOOTPRINTS WOMENS CENTRE

## DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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#### **Sustainable Living**

Throughout this year food services continued to provide nutritious meals, daily for children in daycare, offered a range of accredited and non accredited cookery skills programmes in the Community Training Kitchen and operated the Social Supermarket service at Footprints.

We gratefully acknowledge DfC Pilot Social Supermarket Project continuation funding which enabled Footprints to meet the high levels of need for food support within the community. As the cost-of-living crisis deepened, Footprints in partnership with Colin Surestart established a pop-up Social Supermarket, at Mount Eagles Community Centre. A room in the community centre was refurbished to house the Social Supermarket which is open one morning a week for families in the local area. Our thanks also to Choice Housing, Glenwood Enterprise and private donors for their donations and funding awards which support both Social Supermarkets.

The success of the Social Supermarket model was profiled by Food Cloud IOI in a film launched this year, demonstrating how incorporating surplus food into core community services has helped to create a more connected and sustainable local economy.

We also gratefully acknowledge National Lottery Community Fund as we progressed our plans in the second year of a People & Communities grant. In addition to the delivery of cookery school and food growing programmes, we focused on developing our social enterprise activities to generate new income streams to sustain services. Alongside the provision of a room hire and catering service at Footprints Women's Centre, we are working towards the opening of Danu Street Kitchen, with a view to connecting with Belfast's vibrant food truck trade.

Footprints journey towards building a sustainable community continues and we were delighted to retain the Green Flag Community site award 2023/24 and to facilitate, Repair Café, Belfast on two occasions throughout the year.

We also commenced the process to achieve Belfast Business Promise accreditation. This standard recognises employers working to make Belfast a better city and involves providing good jobs, whilst supporting a sustainable local economy and building a healthier city for everyone. The accreditation also recognises an organisation's commitment to working towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Finally, we would like to thank Marianne Daly for her eight years of dedicated service as Daycare Catering Worker, to wish Marianne well for the future and to welcome Sinead Taylor to the team.

#### **Financial review**

The results for the period are as set out on pages 14 to 39. The charity returned outgoing resources of £147 (2023 - incoming resources of £56,993) of which there were unrestricted incoming resources of £4,629 and restricted outgoing resources of £4,776. At 31 March 2024, the level of unrestricted reserves held was £685,569 (2023 - £680,940).

The Directors have set aside £241,925 (2023 - £209,522) out of unrestricted funds in relation to Core Activities, Business Reserves, Governance Costs and Programme Costs.

#### **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 pandemic and emerging cost of living crises. These have 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.

# FOOTPRINTS WOMENS CENTRE

## DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

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The directors have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks.

#### **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 U Carberry

Ms A Fisher

Mrs S Glymond

Ms R Holmes

(Resigned 15 May 2023)

Ms M McNeill

Ms S Lavery

Ms R Denvir

Ms D Atkinson

Mrs E Duffy

Mrs B Donaghy

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.

#### **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.

# FOOTPRINTS WOMENS CENTRE

## DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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### 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;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; 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.

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



Ms A Fisher

Director

Date: 25/11/24