



# First Steps *Women's Centre*



*Everything was invaluable. I wish that I had got this information years ago*

*This course was wonderful for me and there were so many good things to come out of this. It was the best of all the courses I have done before.*

*I learned a lot of techniques to help me cope better with the stresses of life*

## First Steps Women's Centre Annual Report

2014 - 2015



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[www.firststepswomenscentre.org](http://www.firststepswomenscentre.org)



“ *First Steps Women’s Centre is a diverse organisation in many, many ways. There are a vast range of different programmes and qualifications obtained on any given year within FSWC* ”

# Welcome

Dear Friends,

This is my first year as Chairperson of First Steps Women's Centre (FSWC). I am Hungarian and I first came to Northern Ireland in 2012.

I attended a number of different courses at FSWC including Sage Payroll, Sage Accounts and ECDL. I have first hand experience of what the Centre offers.

First Steps Women's Centre is now in its 17th year. Even to look back on the last decade one can see how far this organisation has developed. From a small house delivering 5-7 programmes on a weekly basis to an organisation which is delivering 60+ programmes and a wide range of services per annum.

Given that we are now living through austerity I believe that our training and education, our childcare and support services are essential. Austerity predicated cuts to services and to funding. However diligent planning by FSWC has enabled it to stem any cuts to frontline services. This has enabled First Steps Women's Centre to continue to deliver a far reaching array of programmes and support for women and their families.

I believe that in another 10 years time many women will look back in awe and real appreciation for First Steps Women's Centre. I believe that they will appreciate the endeavour, hard work and vision that the Board and staff showed. I have also no doubt that these same women and their families will recognise the values and core principles belonging to First Steps Women's Centre. These principles include justice, equality and belief in a better world for women and their families.

During this year First Steps Women's Centre succeeded in an open competition for funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Department for Employment & Learning (DEL). This funding meant that FSWC could plan ahead and begin to develop new initiatives as well as improve upon current successes.

I am also amazed at the success and achievements that individual women have gained by attending the Centre. There is no doubt in my mind that all of this success is down to the meticulous planning, professionalism and care from all Directors, staff and volunteers. The level of demand for additional services including: Transport, Benefit Checker and Counselling have highlighted the expertise being developed and maintained within FSWC. These services have been built and continue to increase year by year.

First Steps Women's Centre will continue to dedicate itself to improving the quality of life for women through education and personal development. We will also ensure that women are supported so that they can make choices for their future. Our role is to help them take the first step and what a step that is!

I am proud to be the Chairperson of this Organisation and it gives me great pleasure to present this annual report to you.

*Katalin Hajdu*  
Chairperson

# Chief Executive's Report

## Diverse, Professional, Dedicated

This is my 9th year at the helm of First Steps Women's Centre. If there are a few words to describe First Steps Women's Centre I believe it would be Diverse, Professional, Dedicated. First Steps Women's Centre is a diverse organisation in many, many ways. There are a vast range of different programmes and qualifications obtained on any given year within FSWC.

Our Information Technology Co-ordinator organised and recruited for 16 different IT courses as well as 4 ancillary (First Aid & Food Hygiene) programmes.

Within Life Skills, 18 courses were organised. These include Numeracy, Literacy, ESOL and Vocational Skills.

Health and Wellbeing had 24 different courses with 218 women enrolling on them. As well as a diverse range of programmes FSWC has welcomed 8 different migrant nationalities attending courses and services in the Centre. These include Lithuanian, Polish, East Timorese, Portuguese, Latvian, Ukrainian, Hungarian and Spanish.

Apart from 62 different courses FSWC has provided a range of other services. For example our Childcare had 71 different children registered throughout the year. These children represented many of nationalities mentioned above. The childcare team built an igloo out of milk cartons and the children had a ball playing inside it.

FSWC witnessed a surge in demand for Counselling and Benefit Checker services. Special thanks to Department for Social Development (DSD) for providing funding through the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme for funding most of the counselling costs. Our counselling provision increased to a remarkable 273 sessions.

A staggering £71,000 was identified in unclaimed benefits this year from our Benefit Checker service.

FSWC continues to utilise the internet to promote all that we do. This includes our website and social media presence (Facebook & Twitter). During this year our numbers and views have really surged. FSWC also ran three Open Days in August 2014. These drew in over 80 women to sign up for the September courses.

One of the most important successes of this financial year was being awarded the European Social Fund programme through Department for Employment and Learning. FSWC utilised the core funding from the Department for Social Development to enhance our range of programmes. Without both sets of funding FSWC would not have been able to achieve all the progress and successes that it has.

This introduction is merely highlighting the breadth of provision and services provided by First Steps Women's Centre. Our success is based on meticulous planning developed by a team of dedicated and sincere staff. Each year that goes by is another milestone achievement for FSWC. The staff, volunteers and Board Members have proven year after year that they are up to the task.

As the financial year has concluded I would like to congratulate all of the staff, volunteers and Board members. Without their dedication, commitment and enthusiasm First Steps Women's Centre would not be where it is today.

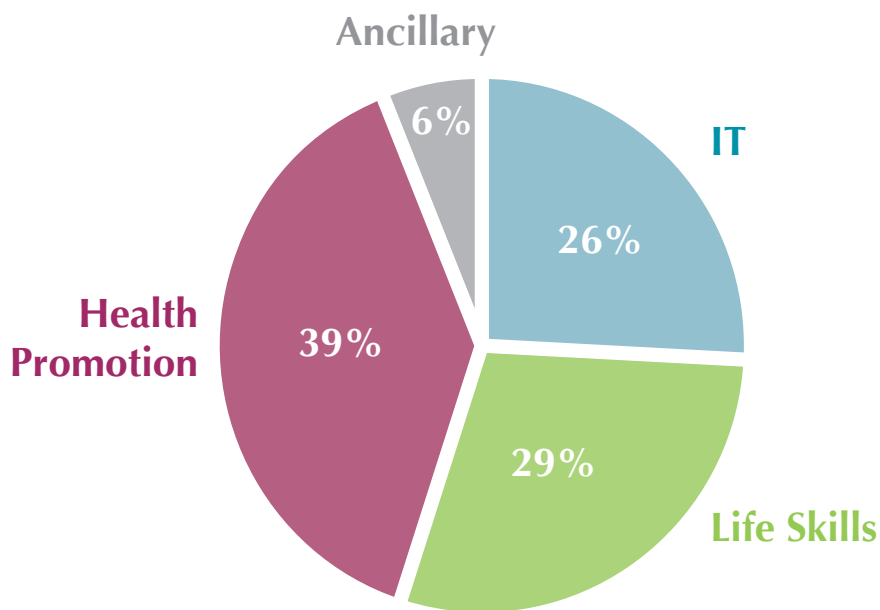
*Michael McGoldrick*  
Chief Executive



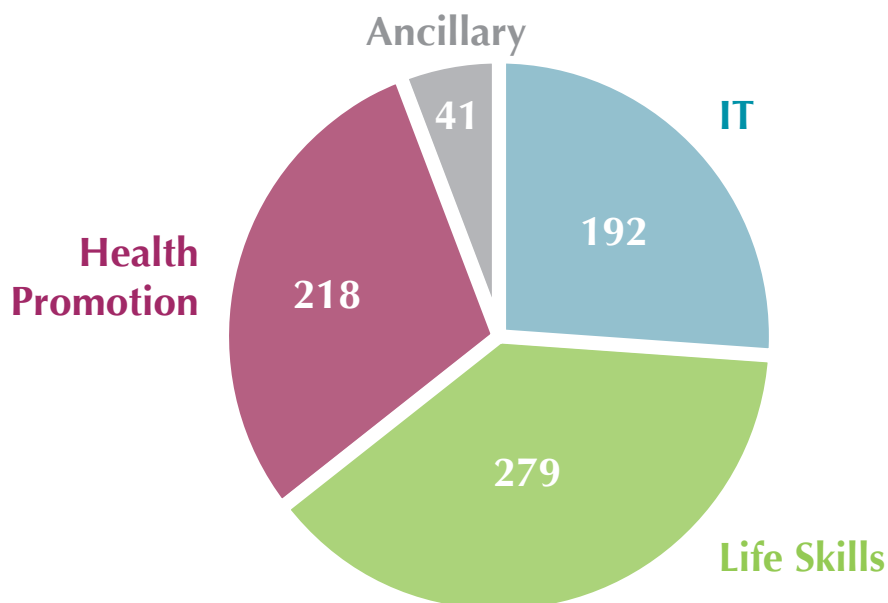
# Education & Training Programmes

Between April 2014 and March 2015 First Steps Women's Centre organised 62 different courses and programmes. These ranged from Information Technology, Essential Skills, English for Speakers of Other Languages, First Aid, Food Hygiene to Health & Wellbeing. Four additional Ancillary courses, First Aid and Food Hygiene were organised by the IT co-ordinator.

## Proportion of courses 2014 - 15



## Number registered to each course area 2014 - 15





# Information Technology

First Steps Women's Centre is the place to be for gaining an IT qualification. This year FSWC ran a number of Sage courses including Sage Payroll and Sage Accounts. Sage Payroll courses were at Level 1, 2 and 3. Sage Accounts ran courses up to Level 2.

The statistics speak for themselves. Retention rates at 87%, attendance rates 84% and pass rates at 100%. This is a credit to FSWC staff, the support provided and to the tutors. The staff and tutors are not only professional but also caring and considerate.

## Information Technology Courses 2014-15

14 Courses with 192 Women Enrolled

ECDL

Text Processing

2 x Next Steps to Computing

2 x Sage Accounts Level 2

Sage Payroll Level 2

Internet Taster

ECDL Advance Powerpoint Level 3

First Steps to Computing

Sage Accounts Level 1

Sage Pay Roll Level 1

Sage Payroll Level 3

Making the most of your iPad



*I hope there are further courses as it does invite women who would not have the confidence to further their skills and gain confidence to complete courses they normally would ignore and shy away from*

*I would recommend the Centre as it is a brilliant place for women who had a career break or want to increase their qualification.*

*I now have the confidence to encourage members of my family and neighbours to attend this course in the future.*

# Food Hygiene

Ancillary Courses

2 x Food Hygiene

## Testimonials:

Most interesting and informative course I've been on

Excellent knowledge and actually made a boring topic enjoyable to learn

# Benefit Checker

The Benefit Checker Service started out in July 2012 as a way of helping unravel the bureaucracy of benefits. First Steps Women's Centre has almost reached the £200,000 mark in identifying additional and unclaimed benefits. This is a fantastic success and is a credit to all staff involved. It is a life saver for many women. This service has been provided in Coalisland, Armagh as well as within our own Centre

In this year 2014-15 FSWC received 137 new referrals. It also helped identify £71,612.83

Total Benefit identified since 2012 is:

**£185,781**

# First Aid

4 Courses with 41 women enrolled

2 x First Aid

## Testimonials:

Excellent facilitator, very knowledgeable

Excellent skills

Excellent tutor, great personality

# Counselling

This was mainly funded through Neighbourhood Renewal (managed by Southern Health Trust) and also other sources. FSWC arranged 273 Counselling appointments throughout the year.

There has been a massive surge in the demand for the Service. It is an area in high demand and sadly FSWC has a finite amount of funding available.

The service is literally a life saver. It has helped women cope with many problems and issues and has enabled them to lead a somewhat normal life.

# Health Promotion

Health Promotion offered a total of 24 courses and 3 workshops which were throughout the year. This has been the busiest year for Health Promotion with 218 women enrolling.

## Health Promotion Courses 2014-15

2 x Walking Group

Living Life to the Full

4 x Wellbeing Techniques

Health4Life

2 x Personal Development

Knitting Class

Time4Life

## 24 Courses with 218 Women Enrolled

3 x Dressing on a Budget

2 x Cook It

2 x Craft & Recycle

2 x Down Memory Lane

Jewellery Making

2 x Living Life to the Full

## Some Testimonials:

*This course was wonderful for me and there were so many good things to come out of this. It was the best of all the courses I have done before.*

*Learning a new skill very therapeutic. I loved this course very much (Jewellery making)*

*I learned a lot of techniques to help me cope better with the stresses of life (Wellbeing Techniques)*

*Everything was invaluable. I wish that I had got this information years ago*

# Life Skills

This year Life Skills recruited 203 women for DEL/ESF courses. These included Essential Skills in Numeracy and Literacy, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), Job Search and conversation classes (Polish and Portuguese).

FSWC also received funding from Ulster Bank for a Money Management training and 1-1 support programme. A total of 76 women attended this training and support service.

There were 152 women placed on an ESOL course between April 2014 – March 2015. Pass rates were 90% and attendance was at 77%. Nine of these women left to move into employment. Seven went into full time and two into part time.

## Some Testimonials:

*Could you please pass on my thanks to Norah. I am now working as a Catering Assistant in ICD. This is a permanent part-time position, which I started on the 5th January 2015 and I am really enjoying it*

*Excellent tutor, very helpful with all in the class - passionate about what she does*

### Life Skills

#### 18 Courses with 203 Women Enrolled

Job Search

Portuguese Conversation

Essential Skills English Higher Level

Essential Skills Maths Higher Level

ESOL – Writing

Money Management Training

Polish Conversation

Essential Skills English Entry Level

Essential Skills Maths Entry Level

ESOL – Reading

ESOL - Listening



# Participant Comments

## ESOL:

"I would recommend this course for my family and friends – the course was very good."

"I really enjoyed the course the teacher is very good and I can easily understand her."

"Outright, I would encourage my friends and acquaintances to learn English."

"Thank you for good opportunities to learn courses while watching my child."

"I would encourage my friends to learn English here."

"I want to continue. It's really good." "For a better future."

## Higher Maths

"I would definitely recommend this course to others as it was good to learn in a small group."

## Entry Maths

"Please do not let FSWC be put aside as funding is necessary to help people in my age group and others. Without this back up, I feel that we would all suffer in the long run. I myself do wish to return next September as I was an under achiever at school."

"I feel that education is important to everyone, but family problems arose and as a result I had to leave this time. I just hope that I will get another chance."

## Higher English

"The tutor was very helpful during one-to-one coaching."

"I would recommend this course as working in a small group is great."

## Entry English

"The English class is very good and the tutor is very helpful"

"I have learnt a lot, especially in spelling and letter writing"

"We had the best tutor ever with his knowledge and skills and he encouraged us every day."

"I'm very happy and will attend again hopefully next year."

# Childcare

71 Children attended Childcare between April 2014 & March 2015

## Bi Lingual Childcare Staff - Funded by BBC Children In Need

FSWC had two staff who could speak Russian, Lithuanian and Portuguese. This was a great help in settling in the children and keeping mums informed about the activities within the crèche.

First Steps Women's Centre also catered for local, East Timorese, Polish, Hungarian and Latvian children..

The Childcare Team built a Santa's Grotto out of recycled milk cartons for Christmas. It was so popular with the children that they kept it up until the end of January.

During the course of the year our Team Leader and staff developed a number of themes for the children. These included Autumn, Winter, Halloween, Christmas and Spring. The children were also involved in making homemade play dough and learning to put icing on buns.

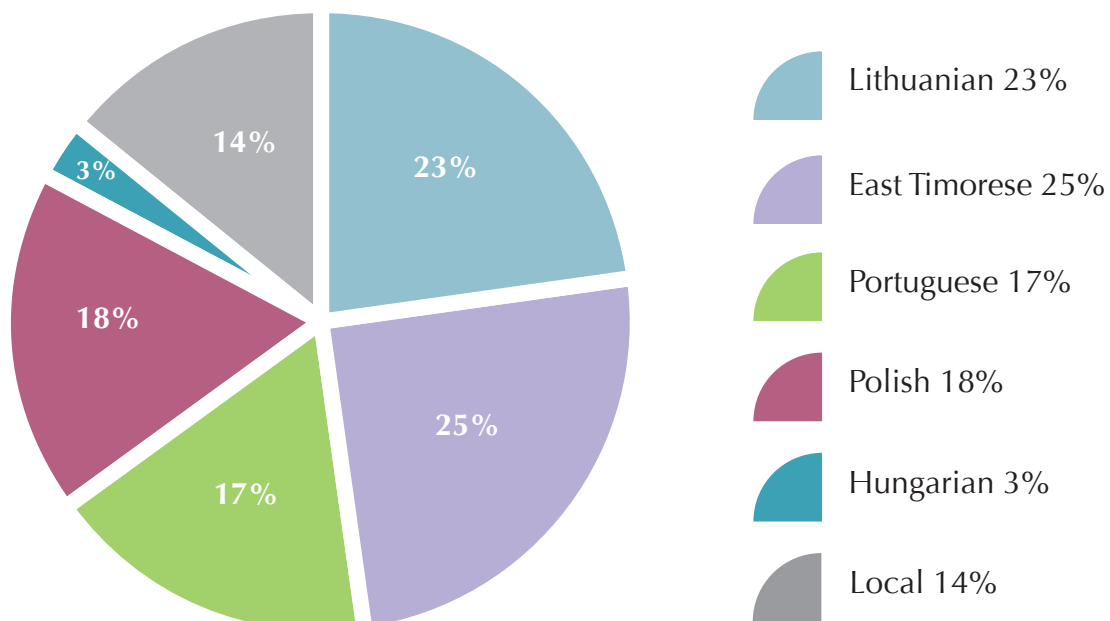
## Some Testimonials:

*Staff listen to your suggestions*

*Staff always keep me up to date with all that's happening, they are very good at that*

*Staff are very welcoming and really help settle my child*

## Nationalities Attending Creche





# Renovation of Reception

FSWC was successful in receiving funding from Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council under its Legacy Fund.



## Transport

The Centre minibus has averaged 168 miles per week. This is based on 964 journeys over a 44 week period. The minibus has proved essential for women especially with young children. Our minibus has collected women in and around Dungannon town, Eglis, Brocagh, Galbally, Pomeroy, Moy, Coalisland, Newmills, Bush and throughout the locality.




# PR & Marketing

First Steps Women's Centre has continued to improve and develop its Social Media platform and its website. These have proven to be an increasingly popular way to promote the Centre and the services that it provides.

Quiz Nights – FSWC held two quizzes during the year raising almost £1,000. Special thanks to Dungannon Rugby Club and McAleers Bar who hosted the quizzes.

Anne Hailes, Irish News journalist visited the Centre in May 2014. Below is a copy of the article in Irish News 12th May 2014



## Anne Hailes

a.hailes@irishnews.com

# First steps for women looking to find peace

**I**T SEEMS that all roads lead to 21a William Street, Dungannon – at least for hundreds of women around Co Tyrone.

This is the address for First Steps for Women's Centre – child friendly and with a busy nursery facility entertaining up to nine different nationalities; classes in a wide variety of subjects and the opportunity for sharing time, talents and life experiences with each other; and, if you wish, ending up with a qualification. Indeed, around 25 per cent go on to a further-education college and end up in a variety of areas of employment including teaching and youth-work-related jobs. One of the most important courses is the Benefit Checker which concentrates on such issues as claiming benefits, managing money, budgeting and sorting out problems – for example, dealing with eviction notices.

Single parents trying to bring up a family, some working part time while juggling life events, find this course a great comfort as it helps save money. And the staff of 16 are able to answer questions with knowledge of the confusing world of benefits.

Like all the courses, this is free of charge – as is the child care, thanks to funding from various agencies.

Big airy rooms, colour everywhere, first-class equipment and, as all the ladies agree, the feeling of family, of belonging to the centre and to each other. One lady said she appreciated how calm the place is, an oasis of peace in her busy life. This relaxed atmosphere encourages conversation. The language classes are hugely beneficial to anyone coming to this country from overseas – they can quickly grasp an English vocabulary new to them in a non-threatening way, especially learning all the local words and expressions that we take for granted. Sitting round a table having



OFFERING SUPPORT: Michael McGoldrick and his team advise women on everyday lifestyle issues. PICTURE: Colin O'Reilly

coffee or a bite of hunch with conversation between adults is something many of the 'students' don't experience in their own homes. When you have small children, grown-up chat is lacking in many lives. I recently heard of an elderly lady in a care home asking to be called by her first name because it was so long since she had heard it spoken. Isolation is a terrible thing. At First Steps, all ages are welcome. They advertise themselves as 'a centre of education exclusively for women, a beacon of hope, support, training and childcare for women in the Dungannon and south Tyrone area and further afield as there are no excursions'. And, just like a family, you'll find there older members of society who bring their experience and kindness. Younger ones trying to make the best of life contribute their enthusiasm – and the little ones, having a ball, safe under the watchful eye of professionally qualified staff. I often think how grown-ups

would just love to have a playground like theirs. Imagine sitting in the middle of a sandpit for a couple of hours playing with building blocks.

The courses at First Steps are geared round the individual and family life. For instance, health promotion promises to improve not only the physical wellbeing but also the mental health of women who perhaps have lost confidence in themselves, have low self-esteem or have specific health issues. Here they can talk to a health-promotion worker. Alongside the counselling offered, it affords women a confidential meeting place where gradually they will build up their courage to confide and get help towards a more positive and healthy future. One in four adults in Britain and the north have the numeracy and literacy courses available are important when preparing for employment and also have a long-term positive impact when helping children of school age.

These days it's probably the younger members of the family who can best find their way around a computer and fix your defaults. Well, now in FSWC computer suite, grown-up women can learn the ins and outs of information technology and the internet and how to use this knowledge to change their ways of communicating, not only with family and friends but with organisations that rely on emails and downloads to carry out their business. Like most of the courses, there's

**"Basically our aim is to improve the quality of life for women through education and personal development and supporting women to make choices for the future."**

Michael McGoldrick

a certificate at the end and the knowledge that when applying for work, they have an important tool to present.

That's all very well but there are those who have led very traumatic lives and to take that step outside the security of their own homes is a big one. In that case, before thinking of one of the accredited courses, a chat with someone sensitive and understanding would be an initial step and that's where Roma Casey comes into the picture. She holds the counselling courses and with many years' experience she can cover areas such as self-doubt, worries over drug and alcohol addiction, the subject of suicide, Troubles-related trauma and student issues. Confidentiality is all important and is assured.

Heading up this busy centre is a man, Michael McGoldrick, the only man running any of the 14 women's centers in Northern Ireland.

Having worked in Armagh and Dungannon Trust and as a community development officer he knows the problems people come up against, his motto is 'there's always a way' and he has proved that to be true. Chief executive since 2007, he has watched the centre grow in size and the ethos become stronger as the years have gone by and proud that earlier this year the centre was awarded Investors in People Silver for the second time.

"Women often come to take up less formal classes – maybe flower arranging or yoga – but then they become interested in other things, especially when it comes to saving money and health issues," Michael says. "Basically our aim is to improve the quality of life for women through education and personal development and supporting women to make choices for the future."


More about First Steps Women's Centre Dungannon at [firststepswomenscentre.org](http://firststepswomenscentre.org)

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Where the Journey Continues...

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# Recruitment Open Day & Other Events

FSWC held 3 Open Days during August (12th-14th) to cope with the demand for courses and programmes. Over 90 women registered during the 3 days.

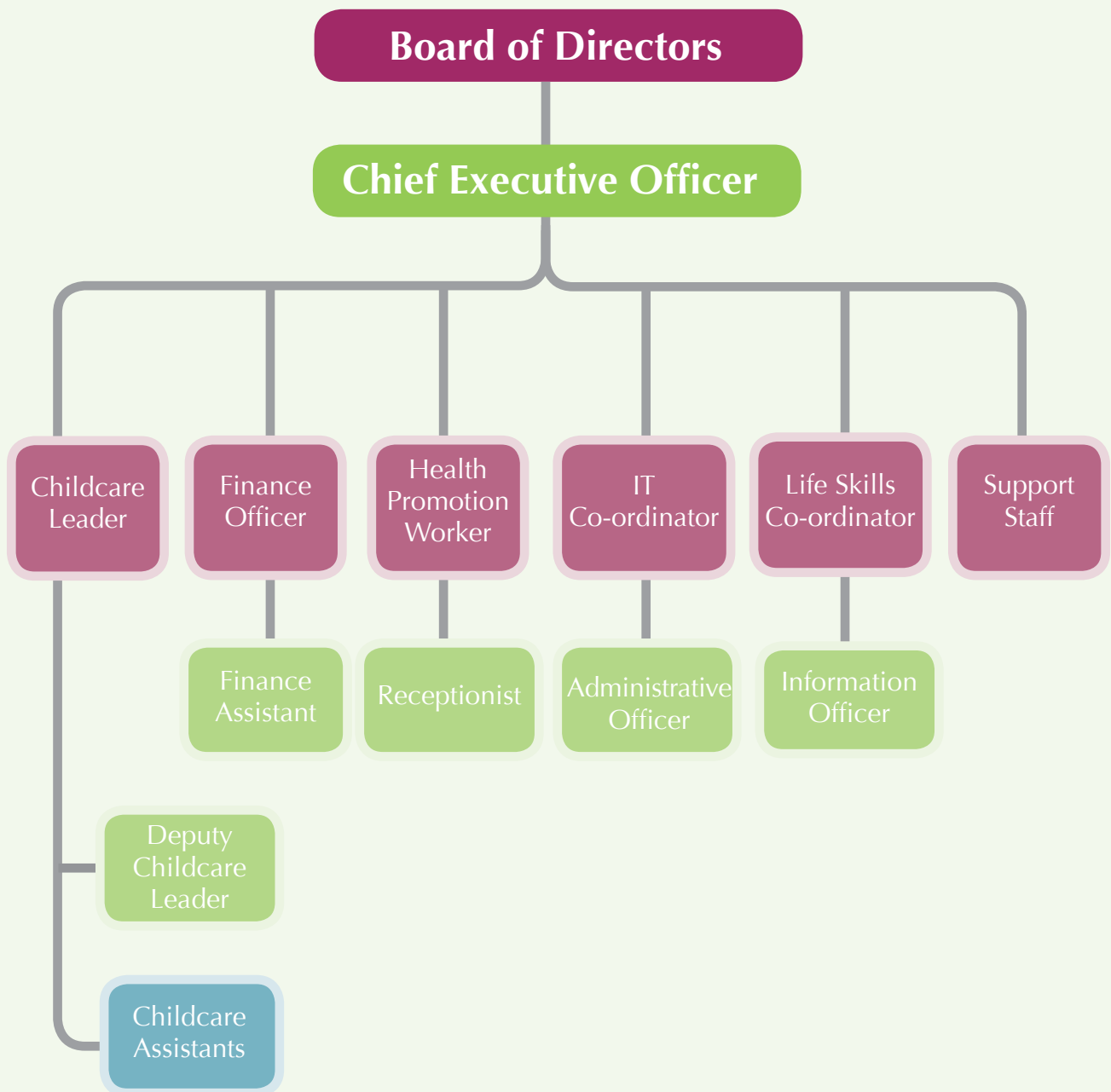
The staff and Board organised a Christmas Fayre and invited all the women, local Churches and other organisations to come along and celebrate with friends. Many women made traditional home dishes and shared them with friends and other visitors to the Centre.



For International Women's Day FSWC invited Letitia Fitzpatrick and Singtonicity. This was a very popular and enjoyable event attended by many women.



# Organisation Structure



# Staff Training

First Steps Women's Centre continues to promote, encourage and invest in continuous improvement for all staff and volunteers.

During the past 12 months staff have continued to gain qualifications and attend training. Most notably was Joanne Orr who graduated with a BA in Business from the Open University. Joanne has now commenced an MSc in HR Management.

**During the past 12 months staff attended training in the following:**

Child Protection

Mood Matters

First Aid

ECDL Advanced

Sage Accounts

Manual Handling

Data Protection & Confidentiality

Domestic Violence Awareness

Fire Safety

Food Safety



# **Annual Accounts 2014 - 2015**

## First Steps Womens Centre

### Detailed statement of financial activities

For the year ended 31 March 2015

	2015 £	2014 £
<b>Incoming resources</b>		
<b>Incoming resources from generating funds:</b>		
Voluntary Income	29,502	14,563
DSD	103,425	103,426
DSD - Pre ESOL	-	8,501
DSD - Neighbourhood Renewal	29,530	-
Sure Start	9,108	5,444
Dungannon & South Tyrone BC	30,063	500
Live and Learn Funding	12,241	15,246
Awards For All	-	9,840
Lloyds TSB	4,130	4,013
Neighbourhood Renewal	-	29,418
DEL/ESF WTEE 19410	208,992	195,135
Clear Small Grants Programme	4,460	-
PBNI	3,700	4,000
Children in Need	-	8,000
Pfizer	-	1,932
MSE Charity	-	(445)
Peace III	-	528
Children in Need	2,000	-
CFNI - Ulsterbank	-	8,455
Leonardo Grundtbig Transversal	-	965
	<hr/> 437,151	<hr/> 409,521
<i>Investment income</i>		
Bank Interest	174	193
	<hr/> 174	<hr/> 193
<b>Total incoming resources from generating funds</b>	<hr/> 437,325	<hr/> 409,714
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<hr/> <hr/> 437,325	<hr/> <hr/> 409,714

## First Steps Womens Centre

### Detailed statement of financial activities

For the year ended 31 March 2015

	£	2015 £	£	2014 £
<b>Charitable activities</b>				
<b>Education and personal development</b>				
<i>Grant funding activities</i>				
Printing, Postage and Stationery	4,010		7,588	
IT Support	3,557		3,808	
Wages and Salaries	200,977		212,469	
Rent, Rates and room hire	22,230		23,688	
Light and heat	7,159		8,479	
Repairs and maintenance	7,005		12,224	
Creche equipment	1,081		684	
Insurance and bus insurance	2,724		2,835	
Staff travel and subsistence	1,485		2,380	
Staff training and recruitment	1,027		3,387	
Motor tax and maintenance	993		1,507	
Participant comfort expenses	1,405		1,585	
Volunteer Expenses	465		1,148	
Course expenses and tutor fees	88,565		75,093	
Legal and professional fees	282		2,407	
Emergency Assistance	418		1,246	
Subscriptions	691		398	
Health and Safety	300		321	
Telephone and fax	3,727		3,640	
Marketing, advertising and seminars	3,452		5,081	
Evaluation Fee	1,298		3,334	
Depreciation	4,727		5,317	
Childcare and travel	2,070		4,294	
		359,648		382,913
<b>Education and personal development total expenditure</b>		359,648		382,913
<b>Total charitable activity expenditure</b>		359,648		382,913
<b>Governance costs</b>				
<i>Activities undertaken directly</i>				
Audit fees	2,220		2,145	
Salaries	34,870		33,321	
Sundry and cleaning expenses	-		50	
Bank charges and Interest	391		390	
		37,481		35,906
<b>Total governance costs</b>		37,481		35,906
<b>Net incoming/(outgoing) resources for the year</b>		40,196		(9,105)

## First Steps Womens Centre

### Balance sheet as at 31 March 2015

	Notes	£	2015 £	£	2014 £
<b>Fixed assets</b>					
Tangible assets	12		25,702		13,044
<b>Current assets</b>					
Debtors	13	89,164		128,188	
Cash at bank and in hand		90,321		69,364	
		<u>179,485</u>		<u>197,552</u>	
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	14	<u>(76,157)</u>		<u>(121,761)</u>	
<b>Net current assets</b>			<u>103,328</u>		<u>75,791</u>
<b>Net assets</b>			<u>129,030</u>		<u>88,835</u>
<b>Funds</b>	15				
Unrestricted income funds	16		93,894		63,873
Restricted income funds	17		<u>35,136</u>		<u>24,962</u>
<b>Total funds</b>			<u>129,030</u>		<u>88,835</u>

The financial statements were approved by the board on 19 November 2015 and signed on its behalf by

**Katalin Hajdu**  
Director

**Company number: NI066869**



# Our Funders









**First Steps**  
*Women's Centre*

“*Supporting women to make  
choices for the future*”

First Steps Women's Centre  
21a William Street  
Dungannon  
BT70 1DX  
028 8772 7648

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[www.firststepswomenscentre.org](http://www.firststepswomenscentre.org)*