

## Foreward

*"They say that time changes things but you  
actually have to change them yourself"*

*Andy Warhol*

**M**any of you will remember the above quote from last year's annual report, the theme of which was progress. This year we have decided to concentrate on change, not least because of the significant changes that the centre has undergone since the last Annual General Meeting. But whereas progress is seen as a positive experience, change is sometimes viewed more negatively - something that a lot of us fear and have to be dragged into kicking and screaming.

But we all have to accept the fact that change is an inevitable part of life and something we can only overcome by adopting a positive attitude towards it. This is easier achieved when we work together as a team - supporting one another and celebrating our efforts, whatever their outcome.

When we look at the history of the centre, we can see it has evolved from 9 women meeting weekly in a single room to the largest community based organisation and community employer in the area. We can't say it's always been easy but we have learned through hard work that we can overcome change in a positive way through the support, honesty, commitment and love of the women who are Footprints.

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## **Chairperson's Report**

I took up the role of Chairperson on Footprints' Management Committee just over 18 months ago. As the first local woman to take on this role it was a tremendous challenge to me in that I believe this has been the busiest period in Footprints' history since it first opened in 1991.

The Management Committee was made up of 4 local women - myself, Margaret Murphy, Isobel Loughran and Mary Fox and 4 women elected by the Women's Committee for their particular areas of expertise, namely Mary Johnson, Margaret McLaughlin, Maxine Talbot and Dr Christine Lavery. To cope with this year's demands of an increasing staff and finances, Footprints had to set up two sub-committees in the areas of Finance and Personnel. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Margaret McLaughlin and Maxine Talbot for their input into these respective committees which has certainly been invaluable in supporting Footprints to become a more efficient and professional organisation. The Finance sub-committee have already outlined their work in the report which follows this piece.

As a representative of the Personnel sub-committee, I feel it important to comment on the volume of work we have managed to get through this year including the recruitment processes which have had to be set up for new posts, a review of the induction process as well as setting up policies and procedures relating to staff and personnel issues. We have also taken steps towards setting up a pension scheme within Footprints for all new staff, as well as looking towards future funding to secure pension contributions for existing staff.

For me personally perhaps the greatest change has been the decision to dissolve the Women's Committee. I felt this committee played a vital and integral role within Footprints in that it maintained the involvement of women users within the centre and I am still not entirely convinced that we have moved in the right direction. However, hopefully our new management structure will prove successful but I would like to stress that I can only see this happening if we continue to create opportunities for women who use the centre to participate in decisions affecting its future. The decision to move towards limited company status is the right one for us at this time. I hope that when we elect our directors in the new year that they will take account of the unique role that the women who make up Footprints play in the life of the centre.

*Patricia Firth*



## **Co-ordinator's Report**

It is with great difficulty that I write this report, and the difficulty is this: quite simply, how do you sum up the past 18 months? Change has ricocheted into every crevice of Footprints Women's Centre and at times we have felt stretched well beyond our capacity. We pursued our objectives in the knowledge that we would have 3 turbulent years, difficult, but necessary to the development of the centre. The long-term benefits to the women and the community have always remained at the heart of the work we have undertaken, although at times it often feels as if we are being pulled away from this only to be brought back on course by the vision and interception of the women who make up Footprints.

Funding brings jobs, expansion and development. It also brings greater responsibility, accountability and ultimately change. Not one single person involved in the life of Footprints has remained unaffected by this change, which can bring hope and success as well as disappointment.

My own role as Co-ordinator has shifted significantly, and I have had to come to terms with the fact that managerial responsibilities, funding applications, finance meetings and monitoring forms have become priorities for me. The responsibility of working with the women and children of the centre now lies with the core staff team. If I am being honest this has been a very difficult transition for me to overcome, as the appeal of the women and the community, as opposed to paperwork and the office, will always have a stronger pull for me.

Three people who have supported me in my role this year have been Frankie McNally, Maxine Talbot and Margaret McLaughlin. Frankie with her support and wisdom, Maxine with her practical, structured and consistent advice and Margaret, who always made herself available to offer assistance with regard to the centre's finances (along with a cup of tea and family hospitality!). I thank them all.

I feel that we are now mid-way through our period of change and whilst we know what it has, and will continue to take out of us, we can look upon our achievements to date with tremendous satisfaction.

The launch of the Young Parents Network last May marked our involvement in setting up a youth project which became recognised as one of the most innovative in West Belfast. Patricia Firth, Martine Friend, Letitia Smyth, June Murphy and Colette McCaughley have worked tirelessly on behalf of the centre in making this project a reality.

Father McGirr has opened the doors of Cloona House to us, where we now rent office/training space to house our new Training Unit on a temporary basis until we build our extension. The long-awaited arrival of our After Schools mobile is due before Christmas where we hope to offer 10-12 places per day to children of women involved in education, training and employment. Thanks to the patience and flexibility of the "displaced" After Schools team we have managed to operate this service against all odds, from last March, when funding was first received, as well as organising a very successful Summer Scheme. Well done Sylvia and Colette.

One area where I believe we have matured and developed above all others, is in our creche provision, under the professional and careful supervision of our Creche Organiser, Esther Kilifin. Thanks to Vivian McConvey's persistent concern in accessing training through Barnardos for our childcare staff, we have been able to avail of high quality childcare training which has maximised the existing skills of our creche team. The forthcoming Childcare Co-



ordinator's post (funded through Lisburn Borough Council) will enhance this service even further and propel us towards offering what I believe will become a comprehensive childcare provision designed to meet the specific needs of the women who use Footprints, either through "on-site" or "off-site" childcare support.

The greatest personal level of satisfaction this year for me has been in the individual achievements of women who have participated in Footprints. The difficulty is, how do you mention them all? Do you talk about June Murphy and Bernie McNally's speeches at the launch of the Young Parents Network or Gail Comerford's achievement in becoming the Catering Manager of the new community business? Or do you start with Mary Duffin's first year at Queens and the fact that 4 women followed her there, with a further 2 to St Mary's Teacher Training College on completion of their Foundation Course (based at Footprints). These are but a few of the personal achievements and whilst we rejoice in them we do not forget the women who come to Footprints for support. It is this aspect of our work which is central to our existence and yet it is the area which has been neglected most by the process of change. Fortunately Mary McNeill's appointment as Shadow Co-ordinator with key responsibility for this aspect of the centre's work will re-charge developments in this area both formally and informally.

The "Shadow Scheme", I believe will act as tremendous incentive to local women confirming our belief in them through paid and valuable employment. Máire Patton and Mary McNeill secured 2 of the 5 posts attached to the scheme and Máire now works in Lisburn Women's Centre and we all know how lucky they were to get her. Meanwhile Footprints continues to benefit from the wise counsel and dedication of Mary McNeill.

Next year will prove crucial in maintaining our training and education programme, funded by Targeting Social Need (TSN) until October 1998. We intend reapplying for a further 2 year's funding and Pauline Lee, our new Training and Education Development Worker has undertaken responsibility for the organisation of an external evaluation of this project by Belfast Women's Training Services and the subsequent development strategy emerging from an "in-depth" consultation process involving past/present users. We hope to submit our funding application before Easter 1998 and we leave this aspect of the centre's work in Pauline's capable hands.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to the work of the centre's Women's Committee and Management Committee. My thoughts on the Women's Committee are quite clear - the women of Footprints are now ready to take on management of their centre - they cannot do this within a Users' Committee. This does not mean that there will not be room in the future for women users to direct and influence the direction of the centre. It will quite simply be channelled through sub-committees to the Management Committee, and will I hope be more truly representative of all interest groups within Footprints.

I look forward to the year ahead when we have an energised Management group prepared to take on the next league of "change" for this year, which we know will require dedication and commitment as we move towards our extension and limited company status.

*"People find it difficult to act on what they know. To act is to be committed, and to be committed is to be in danger...the danger is the loss of identity" (James Baldwin).*

I personally believe it is time to act and take the consequences of the loss of our old identity which I feel we will exchange for something better.

*Gillian Gibson*



## **Finance sub-committee Report**

**T**his year has been a very busy and challenging time for all those concerned in managing Footprints' finances. The opportunity for fund-raising at present has never been so fertile with the injection of monies from the Peace and Reconciliation Fund to the voluntary sector. Footprints, like many organisations in the area, has been very successful in attracting substantial funding towards a number of key projects, particularly those relating to the consolidation of existing services, namely childcare (funded by the Childhood Fund) and the development of new areas of work e.g. The Facilitator's Course, "Women into Engineering" (Training for Women Network).

As W B Yeats says, "Peace comes droppin' slow" and at times it feels as if this also applies to the peace monies. With regard to our application to the Peace and Reconciliation Fund for our extension, the latest update, 18 months on, is that Lisburn District Partnership have offered us £130,000 towards capital costs. We are still awaiting replies on 2 further applications to the DHSS and the Urban Regeneration Fund (DOE).

A great boost to our funding for next year has been our success in building in a key project, "Women into Economic Development" to Lisburn Borough Council's Strategic Economic Development Plan (1997-2000). This will enable us to create a Training Unit within Footprints providing job placements alongside complementary childcare support, meeting the distinct needs of women trainees. With many of our projects we are now moving towards more partnership agreements with other statutory and voluntary agencies and this appears to be a trend we are setting for the future.

Footprints are also seriously developing an income generating project which has involved setting up a community business called Footprints Catering Ltd. This business is located at Glenwood Community campus, providing canteen facilities for students and employees of local factories. The project has been funded by LEDU and Making Belfast Work and involves employing a Catering Manager and in the future, catering assistants. All profits emerging from the business will be covenanted to Footprints Women's Centre.

All of these activities have resulted not only in a tremendous boost to the work of Footprints but also in increasing the financial systems in place to monitor all expenditure and to ensure transparency and accountability in all of Footprints' financial dealings.

Consequently this year Footprints undertook a serious review of its financial procedures culminating in a report being drawn up for the benefit of the management committee, making a series of recommendations on how improvements might be made. The Finance Sub-Committee have undertaken a great deal of the responsibility in implementing these recommendations but key to the overhaul of the whole financial system has been the dedicated and patient work of Cathy Allen, who has co-operated beyond the call of duty to the directions of the committee, in what has been a stressful and demanding year. Cathy and Gillian are also responsible for the financial management of the Young Parents Network, funded by the Communities in Action programme.

We take this opportunity of thanking the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust for their funding which has enabled us to increase our capacity to cope with these new and expanding demands . A glance at our accounts will reveal an increase in our income which is rising steadily each year. Also our revenue grants are becoming less one-off based and more leaning towards long term 2-3 year funding, enabling us to budget and plan ahead for the future.



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## **Women's Committee Report**

I joined Footprints Women's Centre in 1992. I watched as other women had their weekly committee meetings on Monday mornings and was always interested in what was going on. In 1993 I was elected onto the Women's Committee - which at the time was very active with women involved in all areas of the centre's work. For instance, the kitchen was run on a rota basis to ensure lunches were provided daily. The creche could also turn to the committee when and if they needed extra help.

The committee were also really involved in fund-raising and tried endlessly to support the centre financially. We ran a Thrift shop which took up a lot of the women's time and commitment. It started off in Footprints and then moved to Cloona House but after 2 years, it was decided to discontinue it because of lack of space and time. At Christmas, Easter and Halloween we would have ballots. On one occasion we ran a hair and beauty day which was a great success and we recently held a fund-raising disco to raise money for equipment for the terminally ill of the area. This disco included the women performing songs from Sister Act and the Blues Brothers, whilst the friends and daughters of the women did a Spice Girls act. We reached our target and were very proud of our achievements.

We would have been very aware of the social aspect in our centre but in recent years it has dwindled. We would have karaoke evenings and a few beverages and the committee ensured that the centre was opened and closed properly. One night we even had a "paint party" where everyone came in working clothes and brought a bottle for when we had finished painting.

At the end of 1994 the Enterprise Ulster Training Scheme was introduced to the centre and 9 women, many of whom came from the committee, participated. On this scheme we started to take on a lot of roles which the committee had previously undertaken such as helping in the creche, office and kitchen. Some of the committee members also started degree courses and had to leave to concentrate on their studies. Around this time 3 new posts came on board, which basically brought the staff team up to 10 members. A lot of the committee's roles were now being undertaken by staff.

It was then decided new changes were needed in the centre regarding its management structures. In June 1997 the staff, management committee, women's committee and trainees went for a weekend seminar to the Glenavon Hotel in Cookstown. With the help of our facilitator, Paula Keenan, the aim was to review the present role and structures of the existing committees and to come up with a new strategy for the future. When Footprints was first set up it was hoped that representatives from the women's committee would eventually make up the management committee and over the past 5 years this has become a reality. Compared with one representative in 1992, the management committee now has 4 - half of the present committee. However, at the residential it was decided to replace the women's committee with a range of sub-committees established by the management committee to cover areas such as finance, personnel, fund-raising and social activities. We also realised the women were now stronger and in a better position to undertake a management role and it is hoped 7 women from the centre who are knowledgeable of and committed to the centre's ethos and aims will be elected onto the new Management Committee. They in turn will elect 4 professionals. Hopefully this new strategy will give the women the power and position they have worked so hard to maintain and in that way keep the ownership of Footprints Women's Centre in the hands of the women.

*Sinead McPadden*

## STAFF, TRAINEES AND VOLUNTEERS

### Staff

Cathy Allen	Project Administrator
Gail Comerford	Catering Co-ordinator
Gillian Gibson	Co-ordinator
Esther Kilifin	Childcare Organiser
Pauline Lee	Training and Education Development Worker
Marian McKee	Part-time Cleaner
Mary McNeill	Shadow Co-ordinator
Geraldine Murphy	Childcare Assistant (Barnardos)
Colette Whyte	Childcare/After-schools Assistant
Sylvia Winning	After-schools Organiser

### Staff who left during 1996/1997

Betty Kennedy	Training and Education Development Worker
Máire Patton	Projects Support Worker

### Trainees

Bernadette Creaney  
Kathleen Douglas  
Colette McCaughley  
Helen McIlduff  
Sandra Moylan  
Ursula Mulholland  
Margaret Murphy

### Volunteers

Patricia Firth  
Martine Friend  
June Murphy  
Johanna O Prey  
Letitia Smyth



## **Management Committee 1996-1997**

Patricia Firth (Chairperson)

Mary Fox

Mary Johnson (Treasurer)

Dr Christine Lavery

Isobel Loughran

Margaret McLaughlin

Margaret Murphy

Maxine Talbot

### **Finance sub-committee**

Cathy Allen

Mary Fox

Gillian Gibson

Margaret McLaughlin

### **Personnel sub-committee**

Patricia Firth

Dr Christine Lavery

Isobel Loughran

Margaret Murphy

Maxine Talbot

"Footprints Women's Centre has moved forward with considerable thought and speed. They are now meeting the needs of women in the area in a very diverse and professional manner, without having lost the "family atmosphere" which historically was Footprints"

Maxine Talbot, Management Committee



## -Childcare-

### After Schools...

The After Schools is now known as "Fingerprints", with the name being chosen by both staff and children. It has progressed since last year, now running four afternoons per week, from 2pm - 4.30pm. We cater for 12 children per session aged 5-11 years old and these include the children of the staff, trainees, users and women undertaking centre courses. My hours have also increased from 16 to 25 per week and my job title has changed to After Schools Organiser. Colette and myself are the only two permanent staff working on the After Schools project. At times we get help from Bridget and Margaret, which is very much appreciated. The demand for After Schools provision is growing and I feel we need another worker, which we are presently trying to gain funding for.

Playboard has funded us to the amount of £36,500, with an additional £5000 towards a mobile for the project. They have been our lifeline and without them we wouldn't be here, so we can't thank them enough for their support and financial aid. Also, Making Belfast Work have given us £8113 towards the mobile and for this we are very grateful. Hopefully, the mobile will be up and running in time for Christmas. At the moment, both the staff and children are involved in purchasing equipment for the mobile

and deciding how it will be decorated. There is therefore a lot of discussion and excitement about this.

"Fingerprints" allows our young people to develop and be themselves, through the aid of play. We offer the children arts, crafts, physical activities, trips, a magazine and book club, quizzes, cookery, videos, competitions and discussions and we hope the club provides a happy and secure environment for them, where we serve them and they can go on to serve their community.

*Sylvia Winning  
After Schools Organiser*

### The Toy and Book library...

A new toy and book library is in the process of being set up for the children registered with the young parents network creche. Each child registered will automatically become a member of the library, and the amount of members will gradually increase as each new young Parents Network group forms. The main aim of the library is to provide a valuable service for the parents and children through the borrowing of educative and stimulating play materials. There will be a wide range of

carefully chosen toys and books on offer, which will enhance the child's development, enabling them to reach their full potential. For this aspect of the Young Parents Network came through BBC Children in Need and NIVT

*Geraldine Murphy  
YPN Worker*





## The 1997 Summer Scheme...

In August of this year we ran a Summer Scheme consisting of morning and afternoon sessions. Each session had 20 children each. The morning session was for 5 to 7 years olds and the afternoon session was for 8 to 12 year olds.

We prepared different activities for both weeks. During the first week, the children made badges, keyrings and did some baking. On the second week, we took the children to a fire station, McDonalds and ran a disco for them. Most exciting of all was the trip on the Stena HSS. We got our lunch on the boat and the children loved it.

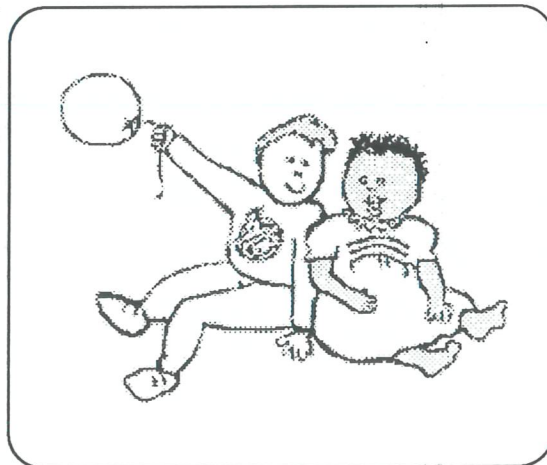
Although it was an exhausting time for all the staff it was a great success and we are planning another one next year.

*Colette Whyte  
Childcare/After Schools Assistant*



## The creche...

There have been some significant change in the creche within the past year. With Footprints taking on board the Young Parents Network with Barnardos, it was vital that another creche worker was employed. After advertising the post twice it was great to employ Geraldine Murphy. Although a Young Parents Network worker, Geraldine also works in the creche two mornings a week.



Myself and Colette also changed from being part-time to full-time workers. The ever increasing demand for childcare is mostly in the 0-2 year age group. We find it both challenging and rewarding to be involved with the children from such an early age. Mary McNeill and the trainees played a very important role in the creche,

helping out a lot throughout the year and hopefully this will continue in the year to come.

Apart from the shortage of staff the only major problem we have is lack of space. With so many young babies in the creche we had to purchase a lot of nursery equipment i.e. bouncy chairs, travel costs etc. These take up a lot of space and also with the Young Parents Network toy library based in the creche, the need for bigger premises is

urgent. Hopefully 1998 will be the year we get our extension.

Lastly I would like to thank our mothers for having the confidence to use our creche and for placing their trust in the childcare staff.

*Esther Kilifin  
Childcare Organiser*



"Footprints continues to expand and thrive in its community. It is making a major difference in the lives of women in the area. Its impact can be seen in the number of women who have moved into paid employment and higher and further education".

Liz Curran, WRDA



## -New Posts-

With growth and development comes change. Change can occur in the building and the lives of the people in it. We have discovered in Footprints that it can be constructive and exciting, but also stressful, because although it can cause the loss to the centre of good active women, to them it is an exciting and well earned opportunity. Four women who have achieved such changes are Mary Fox, Gail Comerford, Máire Patton and Mary McNeill all have moved on to full-time employment in their own areas of development.

Mary Fox has "moved on" to train other women to teach computers in a soon to be established "Women's Tec" in downtown Belfast.

Gail Comerford, our Catering Co-ordinator, is moving to a new business in Glenwood campus as Catering Manager. The business has been funded by Footprints in partnership with LEDU and Making Belfast Work.

Máire Patton and Mary McNeill have moved to community development posts as Shadow Co-ordinators in Lisburn and Footprints Women's Centres.

It is a great achievement for women in our community to come through a women's centre as adult learners, taking the initiative in improving their lives and accomplishing something that they once thought they could only dream about.



*L-R: Máire Patton (Shadow Co-ordinator, Lisburn Women's Centre, Mary Fox (Trainee Computer Tutor, Women's Tec) and Mary McNeill (Shadow Co-ordinator, Footprints Women's Centre)*



## **The Shadow Co-ordinator Scheme...**

**W**hen I first heard about the "Shadow" scheme (a project created by 4 Women's centres and Ligoneil Family Centre to give community active women the opportunity to put their talents and skills to use in a constructive way that would benefit them and their community), I did give it a bit of thought. I wondered if I was skilled enough to go for the post, so I started to consider all the elements relevant to fulfilling the job. I have a good history of working with women and have recently stretched out into the community.

Looking at the courses I have taken in the past few years I felt that everything required was there, but I gave a lot of consideration to my age and the extra hours I would have to do, worrying if I had the energy for it all! If I went for it I had an obligation to the women I work with, the Women's Support Network and the centre, not forgetting the other 4 shadow workers and our tutor, Moya. Then I thought about all the work I have done so far and decided I was a good candidate to apply so I went for it and got it!

I was up against very good and competent competition with the other girls who went for the job and I thank them for their support and hope they will soon be rewarded for the work they have done in our community. I wish them good luck in their future plans.

I have now settled into the job which entitles me to "shadow" our Co-ordinator, Gillian Gibson, and gives me two years' training to enhance the skills I already have and to learn a lot more about running a women's centre and working in the community. Hopefully after the two years I will be experienced enough to co-ordinate in community work with confidence. At the moment it is very daunting and consuming all my thoughts. I can think of nothing else. I have tried to explain to my family - whom I feel I am neglecting, although they are trying to be very understanding - looking for shirts that need ironed, finding odd socks and eating anything they can get their hands on! But apart from that the house is still standing (in its own dirt holding it up!).

To conclude, I would like my experience to encourage other women to take chances. There are opportunities in the community for women who would like to go in that direction.

*Mary McNeill*

*Shadow Co-ordinator*

*Footprints Women's Centre*

## **Women's Tec...**

I have been a member of Footprints Women's Centre for about six years now. I am a representative for the women on the Management and Finance committees and have also tutored computer classes.

When I first heard about the vacancy for a systems management position for Women's Tec I was very confused about applying for this. However, I decided to go ahead for the post and found out on the day of the interview that I had been successful. My first reaction was one of bewilderment as I had convinced myself I gave a terrible interview but I later felt a great sense of achievement. It was a great feeling telling my children I had got a job. The following two weeks were very hard. I found it quite difficult to come to terms with leaving Footprints, as the centre and the people in it had become a key part of my life. But I knew it was time for me to move on, although I was unsure if I had the confidence to do so successfully.

I started working for Women's Tec on 6 October 1997 and our office is situated in the WRDA in Mount Charles. The project's objectives are to set up a "Tec" for women (training, education and childcare) to be taught non-traditional skills by women. The main priority is the provision of high quality childcare to enable women to enter areas of work which are male dominated. There are 7 women involved in the project with 3 female tutors in bench joinery, engineering and systems management. My own post is systems management role will be to teach women computer skills with recognised certificates, and to encourage them to continue to a higher level in this area.

While writing this I have been employed for 7 weeks now and I am thoroughly enjoying it. I am still on the Management committee and hope to remain in contact with Footprints for a long time yet.

*Mary Fox*

"Over the last years I have noticed a dramatic change in Footprints Women's Centre. The level and quality of service that they offer has improved 100%, they have developed a professional attitude in all of their dealings with outside agencies

I am continually impressed with the quality of student that take part in the courses we offer, and the results they achieve are second to none

Well done Footprints - keep up the good work".

Chris Aldridge, Suffolk Community Services



# The Young Parents Network

## Parents and partnership in action..

Three agencies, two centres, one Steering Group, one Resource Panel, an Agency Liaison Group, a Creche, a Development Worker and Co-worker, two link practitioners and, of course, loads of energetic young parents and their children - mix them together with a Partnership agreement, a reasonable measure of funding and what have you got? The Young Parents Network!

The impact of the Young Parents Network in Poleglass has been significant in the short time it has been up and running and it has established itself as a credible community project within the area, "lifting young parents from the margins and into the very heart of community life". Eight young parents showed great commitment in fully participating in the 16-week programme, meeting twice a week and covering issues such as child development, parenting and social activities. The reasons why the young parents were attracted to the programme centred on the opportunity to meet other young parents, as well as experiencing and learning new things.

*"It's good to get out of the house and to get to meet people who are like myself".*

*"Being able to get time to myself"*

*"I enjoy coming to the group to see everybody, to get a break from my child".*

*"My child really enjoys it and she's never been in a creche before".*

*"The workers are very nice - they are very good with the children".*

Feedback from the young parents on the impact of the Young Parents Network has been more than positive. In the area of self-development, all of the group felt more confident in themselves; they felt better equipped to deal with anger and conflict; they had a better understanding of the impact of their life experiences on raising their children and consequently, their individual awareness was increased regarding their roles as parents:

*"The programme helped me to be a better parent"*

*"I have benefited by being aware of my child's tantrums and emotions as well as learning about relationships"*

*"The programme was a great help - I have learnt how to cope with things differently"*

*"I think more about relationships...my needs and what my child needs too. I feel I can listen more to my partner's needs and understand"*

*"It has made me feel that I am important in every way!"*

Achievements have been at both individual and project level, establishing a real working partnership between the community, voluntary and statutory sectors. This is unique in the area. The success of the project is due to hard work, good relationships and the ownership and support from people in the local community, as was seen on the launch of the project in June this year. It is important to acknowledge the breadth of people actively involved in the project from the Steering Group, Resource Panel and Health visitors to the administrative and creche staff. The young parents are beginning to find their voice and moving into taking action for themselves on issues such as affordable childcare, safe areas for their children to play and organising a drop-in facility. Funding has been secured for a toy/book library and a photography project which will challenge the negative images of young parents.

Three members of the original group have gained places on a community leadership programme (SEELB) and others are re-entering education by attending courses at Footprints Women's Centre and Lisburn FE College. The project has started to engage with two other groups of young people: young fathers focusing on their specific needs and secondly, providing support for young women who are pregnant. As the Young Parents Network moves towards self-management in Poleglass, the young parents and the community will be active in this process. With increasing skills and knowledge the young parents will advocate for their rights and their children's rights; will work towards reducing isolation and marginalisation felt by young parents; and influence procedures by participating in decisions made about services that have such an impact on their lives.

*Lorraine Devlin  
Development Worker*



## A young parent's perspective...

**M**y name is Bernie and I would like to tell you what Young Parents Network is about and what we do.

We are a group of eight young women who have been coming to the Young Parents Network twice a week since November last year. On a Tuesday afternoon we meet for a "Drop-in" at Poleglass Youth centre and on Thursday mornings we meet at Footprints Women's Centre for our groupwork session. It has been something to look forward to and has become a routine for us each week, as well as our children getting used to the creche and enjoying this.

When we come together with Monica and Loraine, we get "time for ourselves" to discuss our children, our lives, our families. We get to talk about our feelings, emotions and opinions that are particularly important to us being young people and young parents in this area. During the 16-week programme we have been able to share experiences, making choices about choices in our lives and our needs as young parents, as well as learning about child's play and development.

Personally, it helps me to get through the week knowing that I have people I can talk to about the feelings I want to express and being able to do this in a relaxed, safe environment.

As a group of young parents, we have taken upon ourselves to highlight local issues that have an impact on us - educational and training opportunities/, housing and safe child play areas. Basically we are trying to get over hurdles that are in our way. There should be more creche and childcare facilities, not only for us as young parent, but for other parents who would also welcome opportunities to be supported in our efforts to get back into education and training.

So what have we gained by being members of the Young Parents Network pilot group? All round it has made us think about parenthood, about being a better parent and about enjoying and learning from our children's experiences.

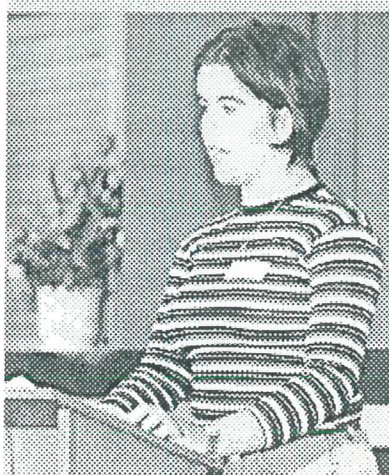
We have become stronger in our self-confidence and in finding our voices, to be able to speak out. Also to be prepared for what's around the corner, as our children grow up and we become "older parents", to have an understanding of their developmental needs and how we should let them express their emotions from an early age. We feel that we are an important part of this community and by being welcomed and supported in both the women's centre and the youth centre, this has enabled us to share experiences and get reassurance from other parents who have been through things before.

Even in the last 6 months, our group has seen a lot of changes in our lives as young parents: some good times, some harder times but by being part of this group, we can offer each other help and support, knowing that there is a friend to turn to.

Looking to the future...some of us have been successful in gaining places on a Community Leadership programme run by the SEELB; most of the group are aiming to begin courses in GCSEs and other training offered by Footprints Women's Centre. We have just begun a series of workshops to gain skills in photography and we have been successful in getting funding to set up a toy and book library as a resource for young parents.

To the next Steering Group, we will be offering our input and also supporting the next incoming group of young parents. As the Young Parents Network grows in this area, this first "pilot group" are looking forward to watching other groups of young parents grow, just like we have done.

*Bernadette McNally  
June 1997*





"Footprints is a centre which has worked to develop the position of women in this community. They have worked with them to identify their needs, which as the centre has developed and grown have changed themselves.

The Community Forum has always recognised in the role of Footprints not only for women in their centre but in the process of developing the Greater Twinbrook and Poleglass area and the position of women in this community.

The centre has a sterling commitment to openness and learning. Its staunch defence of the process being as important as the outcome has been a lesson for us all and Footprints acts as a constant and needed guardian of those values as this community gets better organised and those who choose to work within it become more accountable".

From the Community Forum with love and respect



user's daughter and a former member who sadly died. These were presented to Woodbrooke Medial Centre on 29 October 1997. The idea for the night came from Margaret Murphy and she made a great Whoopi Goldberg!

Sister Act has been a great success which resulted in further bookings, which have all been done free in aid of charity. However, we are open to paid work in the future (just to cover our expenses!)

*Helen McIlduff*

## Travel...

I would like to say that all the women in the centre were very excited last year due to the travel that was going on within Footprints.

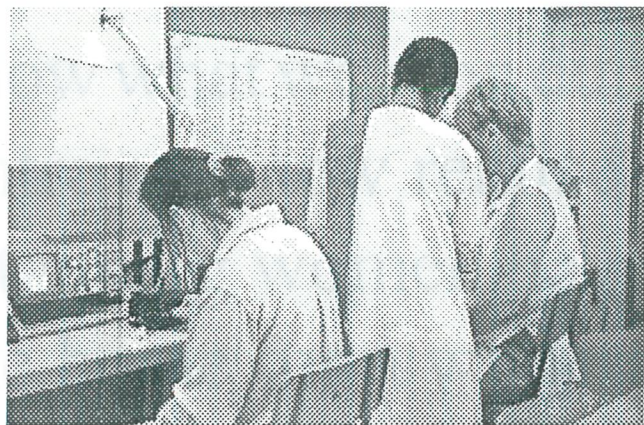
Nine women got the opportunity to go to Newtec College, London, which they enjoyed very much. Our Creche Supervisor & Chairperson also got the chance to go to America. They travelled all around the states to different places and went to different conferences, which proved very beneficial to them. After all, it benefits the children going to the creche, knowing their carers are fully trained and up to date with various developments. Gillian went to Mijas in Spain with the Women's Support Network and met women from Bosnia, Israel and Palestine. They were able to share with each other the troubles they were living through. I also think it was very emotional for all those involved. Our senior citizens have had many bus runs to different locations for shopping and social activities. They also went to Butlins in Ayr which they enjoyed very much.



*Strictly Ballroom in Ayr!*

The centre has also had some residential this year, which I was delighted to be invited to. But most exciting of all is the opportunity that myself, Anne and Bernie have been given to go to Brussels with Ballybeen Women's Centre in early December 1997 - something we are really looking forward to, especially the tour of the European Commission.

*Letitia Smyth*



*Women participating in electronics engineering at Newtec College, London*



## **-Training and Education-**

The new academic year at Footprints has kicked off to a brilliant start, with over 100 women attending educational and recreational classes each week. A diverse range of courses are available at the moment, with everything from Assertiveness to a Foundation Course in Women's Studies being provided.

The "Women Moving On" courses facilitated by Belfast Women's Training Services continues to be popular this term. Those involved in the course will hopefully "move on" to the "Women Progressing" class in January 1998.

Interest in the "Women into Politics" course also remained high this term, with all of the women involved enjoying the lively discussions and topics of interest covered. A particular highlight was the visit of Mrs Bernadette McAliskey to the group in October.

Footprints has also worked in conjunction with Lisburn Women's Centre and Lisburn College, to develop a 14 month "Women into Engineering" project. The programme began on Monday 10 November 1997 and will continue to run until March 1999. There are five women from Footprints involved currently and all will get the opportunity to experience job placement with local employers including Montupet, Europa Tool and Barbour Threads. An NVQ Level 2 and a guaranteed job interview with their placement provider makes it a real opportunity for those involved to gain employment. A number of computer courses are also being provided this term, with Lagan Valley Educational Project being the venue for a basic computer course for beginners and Suffolk Community Houses working with us to provide RSA Word processing stage 1. As ever these have proven to be exceptionally busy.

This term has also seen the development of cross-community residentials involving

women from Footprints and Shankill and Ballybeen women's centres. The first of these took place at the end of October, when members of Footprints Irish class, accompanied by Gillian Gibson and myself, travelled to the Donegal Gaeltacht with women from Shankill. It was a brilliant weekend, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all who participated.

A group of women from Footprints and Ballybeen will also be travelling to Brussels in early December. All of the women involved successfully completed the "Women Moving On" and "Women Progressing" courses in 1996 and are confident that this trip will cement existing links between the two women's centres. The group will be visiting the headquarters of the European Commission, as well as attending a session at the European Parliament. We wish them a successful journey and hope that it is the first of many such ventures.

Although Mary McNeill has moved on from supervising the Enterprise Ulster Scheme within Footprints, it is still going strong. There are six trainees currently involved in the programme, offering support to the office, creche and kitchen staff. Recruitment for new trainees is ongoing and we look forward to welcoming a number of new faces in January 1998. As well as all of this activity, the centre is also delighted with the success of Mary McNeill and Máire Patton in securing shadow co-ordinator posts with Footprints and Lisburn Women's Centres respectively. Congratulations are also forwarded to Mary Fox who gained employment with the non-traditional skills programme in October 1997. Well done to all three!

Overall, we have experienced an extremely full and busy term and hope to repeat this success in the new year.

*Pauline Lee  
Training and Education Development Worker*



## Irish Culture...

**D**uring October 1996 an Irish class was started in Footprints Women's Centre. It combined conversation with writing to accommodate women who had children start scoil na fuiseoga. Although it is only level 1, it is vital in introducing women to the pronunciation and spelling of basic words which they may encounter while helping with their children's homework.

Some of last year's women have returned to this year's level 1 Irish class along with a number of new women. Some, however, have progressed and now need a level 2 class which the centre is unable to provide due to lack of resources and space.

Last year, the class expressed an interest in attending a residential course in a Gaeltacht area. Having contacted the Shankill Women's Centre and arranging a cross-community effort, we applied for funding from the Ultach Trust and were successful in our application. We went to Gleann Cholm Cille from 24-27 October 1997, thoroughly enjoying the course while building trust and friendship between both groups.

Most of the women who went to the Gaeltacht and a few others are now doing a culture class. Women from Footprints, Shankill and Shanty Women's groups will study throughout the year and have a couple of residencies in Dublin and Belfast.

Although the situation may be better than a few years ago, there is still room for improvement. An interest in our own language and culture must be encouraged and developed and hopefully this will be given as much, if not more, support and practical help this year as was given last year.

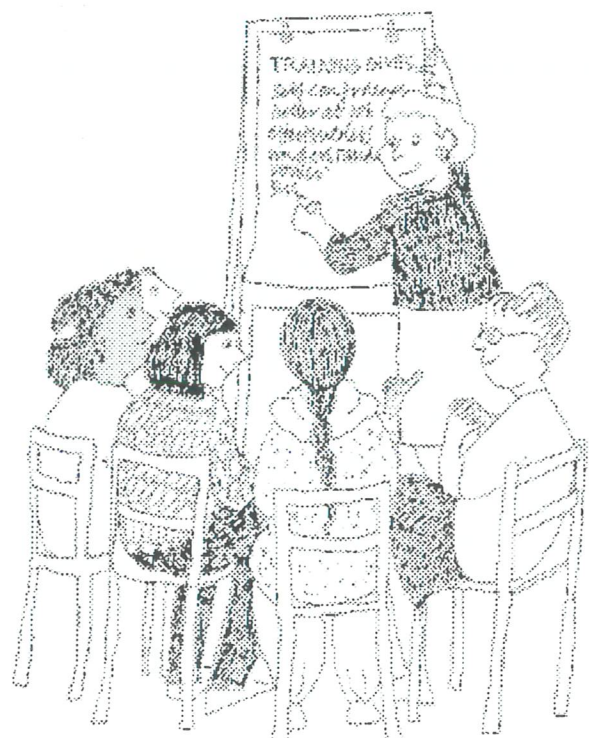
*Roisín O Reilly*

## Women and Education...

When women come into the centre for the first time, they are offered a choice whether or not to take up education classes or to take advantage of the drop-in area. Footprints offers a wide and varied range of classes, from personal development, "Women Moving On", assertiveness and driving theory to a higher level of course which leads to university entrance.

Twelve women from the centre successfully completed a 2-year foundation course, graduating at Jordanstown in July of this year. A few of them have went on to University. The "Women Moving On" course, which I mentioned above, is followed on by "Women Progressing". I myself completed these courses and am now currently on a two year foundation course on "Women's Studies". Fifteen women are on this course and hopefully we will continue together for the next two years. My hope is that I stick out the two years and act as a role model to other women who wish to go back to education.

*Margaret Murphy*





## Community Facilitator Course...

**W**hen I first heard about this course I was both very interested and nervous about whether I would be able to cope with the work involved. The course enables women involved in community work to train as facilitators/trainers, empowering them to use their skills instead of having to rely on professional tutors.

The course focused on such things as how to keep participants quiet and non-disruptive i.e. put your hand on the disruptive person's shoulder and indicate to the person who wants to speak.

During the course I had to prepare a hour long session on Stress Management, which was nerve-wrecking but enjoyable and built up my confidence immensely. I couldn't believe I had actually done it and the very positive feedback was a real confidence boost.

I was really lucky to get the chance to do this course, which was run jointly with Lisburn Women's Centre for 24 sessions. There was a lot of support and commitment from within the group which proved really valuable. It was enjoyable and encouraged many to progress further with this type of work or do other personal development based courses.

I would strongly encourage anyone to take up this course if they get the opportunity.

*Colette McCaughley  
Community Facilitator*

## Enterprise Ulster...

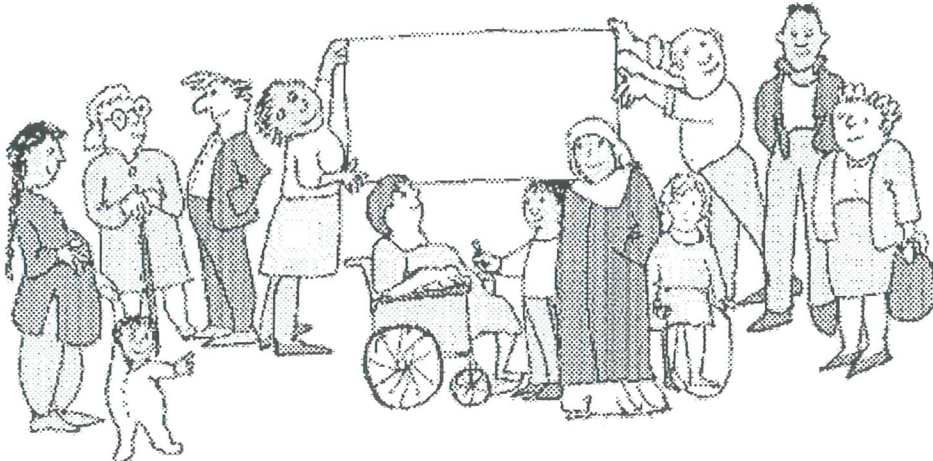
Job training in Footprints Women's centre has been ongoing for 4 years now and has been very successful in helping women to further their education and gain employment. The training runs for 2 years and is through Enterprise Ulster.

There are 5 women and myself placed here at Footprints for our training and mine consists of working on the computer, photocopying, filing and processing incoming and outgoing mail. Part of our training is in the creche working with children from 0 - 5 years. Myself and three other trainees are currently undertaking the 2-year Women's Studies Foundation Course - an access course to university which is equivalent to 2 A levels.

In addition to taking part in the training, we attend social functions, meetings, take an active part in fund-raising and visit other women's centres. Team building is also an essential aspect of training and we went on a residential for this, undertaking various activities, one of which involved walking across a 50ft high beam wearing a harness! This activity, I was reluctant to take part in as I thought it was safer to observe but the weekend was enjoyed by all.

At the end of the job training we hope to have achieved sufficient work experience and qualifications to go on to employment or further education. A bonus is paid at the completion of the training.

*Bernie Creaney*



## Courses 1996-1997

AROMATHERAPY  
ASSERTIVENESS  
BASIC MATHS  
CLAIT  
COMMITTEE SKILLS  
COMMUNITY FACILITATOR'S COURSE  
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP  
COMPUTER AWARENESS  
COUNSELLING SKILLS  
CRAFT  
CREATIVE WRITING  
DRIVING THEORY  
INDIAN COOKERY  
IRISH LANGUAGE  
IRISH STUDIES FOUNDATION COURSE  
MANAGING AND MOTIVATING PEOPLE  
NEW YOU  
OLD TIME DANCING  
P6/P7 CURRICULUM  
REFLEXOLOGY  
SUPERVISORY MANAGEMENT  
WORD PROCESSING  
WOMEN INTO POLITICS  
WOMEN MOVING ON  
WOMEN PROGRESSING  
WOMEN'S HEALTH  
WOMEN'S STUDIES FOUNDATION  
COURSE  
YOGA

## Tutors 1996 - 1997

CHRIS ALDRIDGE  
CHRISTINE COMPTON  
LIZ CURRAN  
MARY FOX  
GERRY GRIBBEN  
ROSANA HUQ  
BERNADETTE JOHNSON  
V A KAMBLE  
LORNA KEENAN  
BETTY KENNEDY  
LISBURN COLLEGE TUTORS  
MAUREEN MCAVOY  
HELEN O CONNOR  
ROÍSÍN O REILLY  
ULSTER PEOPLE'S COLLEGE TUTORS  
YVONNE ROBINSON  
JOANNE VANCE  
LINDA WALKER

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL THE TUTORS  
FOR THEIR HARD WORK, DEDICATION,  
SUPPORT AND COMMITMENT  
THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.





# **FUNDERS (1996 -1997)**

BBC (Open University)

Belfast Women's Training Services

Community Relations Council

Down & Lisburn Health and Social Services Trust

Enterprise Ulster

European Structural Fund

Interchurch Reconciliation Fund

Lisburn Borough Council

Making Belfast Work

Montupet

National Lottery Charities Board

Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust

NIPPA (The Childhood Fund)

Playboard (The Childhood Fund)

## MISSION STATEMENT

Footprints exists to help women grow in confidence, to become more aware of their own potential and to create a positive model for their children.

The purpose of Footprints is to provide quality childcare, support, education and training for women from the local community.

Footprints is based on a community development methods; it is run by women for women in a friendly and non-threatening environment, creating a space where a woman's voice can be heard and enabling women to move out from the private sphere of the home to take their rightful place in the public world.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To create better quality care for children, and better working conditions for child-care workers. To enhance the status of child-care work within the area, making it a more attractive job for women and enabling more women to participate in education and training/drop-in and social activities.

To provide a wide range of support services and social activities that respond to the needs of women in the community and increases their employability.

To provide an education and training programme for women in the area of a professional high standard, that offers progression from introductory courses, through to access and further education, supported guidance and counselling; and provide a structured training programme for volunteers, including job placements.

To have a comfortable, well-equipped building that can facilitate all the activities in the centre.

To encourage women to take an active and leading role within their own community, giving women and children a voice, in order to bring about positive change in both themselves and the wider community.

To create a community café business that will generate income and employment as well as publicising Footprints' work.





**WOMEN'S CENTRE  
6 Colin Road  
Poleglass  
BT17 0LG**

**Tel/Fax: (01232) 625083**