

Chairpersons Report

The Sligo Family Resource Centre celebrated the tenth anniversary of its opening in 2005. This celebration culminated in the publication of a collection of memoirs of those who have been involved in the Centre over the past ten years as volunteers, workers, service users and committee members. The book *From Acorns to Mighty Oaks* was launched at the end of the year by Ann Donegan FAS. The Centre has grown considerably in the ten years since its inception and it now provides services for up to 100 families a month in a warm and supportive atmosphere.

The most up to date information is provided on family related issues on request to over 100 enquiries a month by the Community Employment staff. The Centre provides the facilities for many groups to meet in an anonymous and caring environment on a regular basis or when required. We also provide a referral service to other relevant agencies or community groups where necessary.

The committee and staff of the Centre had a very fruitful strategic planning day in the Radisson Hotel on the 28th of May 2005 where they reviewed the Speak Nexus evaluation programme and the three year plan for 2006-2008.

Work carried out during 2005 included the continuation of the support groups many of whom had been set up in 2003/4. These include the adoptive parents support group, the 0-6 parent support group, the birth parents support group and some work with lone parents. Other direct work with parents included supporting the parent and toddler group, the provision of childcare training to fifteen women from Globe House reception centre for asylum seekers and the very popular drama classes for parents and their toddlers. We also had the annual family fun day with up to one hundred parents and children in attendance.

The work with children in the past year included the regular art classes on Saturday mornings, and the after-school music and art classes every Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. In the summer we had up to forty children attend the annual summer camps and we ran an outreach summer-camp in a local community centre where the children did some wall murals with a local artist. This work led to the Centre being approached by the Sligo Corporation to run after-school music and art workshops for the local children who would have difficulty in attending those being run in the Centre. These ran from September to Christmas and ended with a party for the children and their families displaying some of their art work and performing some of the songs learned during the term.

In 2005 the Sligo FRC with Diversity Sligo secured a family support worker seconded to the FRC from the Health Service Executive North West to work with refugees and asylum seekers. This worker has proved invaluable to the Centre in terms of providing family support, organising education and training for this group and cultural integration events within the community. The needs of this group are very diverse and Paddy Crampsey's input has been an example of best practice to other similar groups throughout the country.

In 2005 we were also successful in securing funding from the Dormant Accounts Fund for a family support childcare co-ordinator to run a sessional childcare facility and provide direct short-term support in the homes of families referred to the Centre from health professionals and others. Recruitment took place at the end to 2005 and Charlotte Bussmann started work in January 2006. The first childminding sessions took place last week.

During the year the co-ordinator, Elizabeth King, was granted parental leave in the form of two half days per week. The Family Support Agency agreed for the Centre to employ a second part-time co-ordinator to work one day a week. This arrangement came into effect in December 2005 when the new part-time co-ordinator Maria Scott was appointed. We

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welcome the additional qualified staff in all of these areas and look forward to reaping the benefits of their combined experience. At present we also have a student from IT Sligo and St .Angela's College on work experience placements.

Our latest development involves the formation of a fathers support group using funding received from the Department of Social and Family Affairs and a young parents support group. We hope to consolidate the provision of services for parents, grandparents, families and children we already offer and to develop an outreach home-help type service for more vulnerable families in the coming year. We aim to target Travellers, refugees, asylum seekers, and other new members of our communities to use our services.

Other work of the Centre includes the continuation of the FAS Community Employment Scheme under the supervision of Bridie Walsh and the amalgamation of the scheme with another smaller scheme, *Chez Nua*. There are now eleven workers employed under the CE scheme in the Centre and a further five in *Chez Nua*. We are also involved in supporting families locally and regionally with our involvement in the Sligo Traveller Support Group, Diversity Sligo, the HSE NW Children and Young People's Committee, Sligo County Childcare Committee and the NW FRC co-ordinators', administrators' and chairpersons' meetings.

The management committee is made up of fifteen volunteers, three of whom have been involved with the Centre for more than five years. In 2004/5 five new members joined the committee. This year Noreen Hickey, Sally Ward, Kathleen Feehily, Jim Sheridan, Jane Toomey and Una Jackson are stepping down as directors. We would like to thank them all for their dedication to the committee of the Centre over the many years they have been involved. The Centre is indebted to the volunteers and staff for their time and commitment. Personally I would like to thank all the committee and staff for your help and support over the year as chairperson.

As a committee we would like to thank Ailim Support Agency for their constant support and the training they provide which is essential. We plan to have more training in selected areas in the coming year.

We would also like to thank our funding agencies the Department of Social and Family Affairs, FAS, the Health Service Executive, the Vocational Education Committee, Sligo Leader, Dormant Accounts Fund, Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, National Lottery, Allied Irish Bank Better Ireland Awards, People in Need, the Kennedy Foundation Fund and International Fund for Ireland for their continued support and commitment.

Ursula O'Shea
Chairperson

Mission Statement

The Sligo Family Centre seeks to serve all families without discrimination, in a warm, caring and open environment. We continually strive to identify ongoing and changing needs and to respond to them in a positive fashion. We aim to provide support, information and development courses of the highest standard to families in the Sligo area.

Objectives

- to highlight family needs and issues as they arise, to provide an appropriate response to needs and issues, including a range of drop-in services and activities and where appropriate, to facilitate other local or national family support groups consistent with our objectives;
- to provide immediate access to family related information in an informal, non-directional and confidential environment, to provide public access to family related resource and information material in appropriate formats, and to provide this service widely in Sligo and surrounding areas;
- to provide immediate support and guidance in relation to family issues, with onward referral where appropriate to statutory and voluntary agencies and to develop responses to such other family issues as may arise from time to time;
- to contribute, in consultation with other groups as appropriate, to the implementation of the North Western Health Board's comprehensive child-care and family support programme.

Background to Sligo FRC

In 2005 the Sligo FRC celebrated the 10th anniversary of its first opening to the public. The Centre came about as a result of the activities organised in Sligo for the International Year of the Family (1994).

The committee at that time devised the idea of a family centre where people could receive information on all issues relating to families in a warm and friendly environment. Since then the Centre has located premises in Stephen Street, Church Street and finally the Mall where it is presently situated.

Up until 2003, the Centre had been staffed by a FÁS scheme with a supervisor and employees which expanded over the years from seven to sixteen.

There was a brief period in 1998/9, when, with funding received from the Peace and Reconciliation Fund, the Centre employed a development worker and an administrator.

In March 2003, the Sligo Family Centre received funding from the Department of Social and Family Affairs through the Family Support Agency (FSA) to employ a co-ordinator and administrator and provide core funding for the next three years. Today we are one of almost one hundred Family Resource Centres in the country and are in the process of seeking funding from the FSA for the next three years. Together with our main funders, FÁS, the FSA, Health Service Executive North West, the Dormant Accounts Fund and others we have been able and will continue to provide support and services to hundreds of families in Sligo.

The book *From Acorns to Mighty Oaks* published at the end of 2005 outlines the main highlights and events of the past ten years. Copies are available at the Centre.

Management structure and staff

Chairperson:	Ursula O'Shea
Vice Chairperson:	Teresa O'Dwyer
Treasurer:	Christ Spoorenberg
Secretary:	Jane Toomey
Directors:	Bernie Davey, Noreen Hickey, Una Jackson, Josette Newmann, Dympna McNulty, Kathleen Feehily, Benny Swinbourne, Jim Sheridan, Rebecca Treanor and Sally Ward.

The management committee is made up of fifteen volunteers, three of whom have been involved with the Centre for more than five years. In 2004/5 five new members joined the committee.

Ongoing sub-groups of the committee include the steering group which meets on the first week of every month. This group is made up of four members of the management committee, the co-ordinator, CE supervisor and administrator. Immediate every day running of the Centre is discussed at these meetings.

There is also the executive sup-group which is made up of the chairperson, deputy chairperson, secretary and treasurer. This group meets in the event of a crisis or an employment issue.

In addition to these, there is usually a sub-group established of two to three committee members working with staff in the event of a specific piece of work to be undertaken, then disbanded once the work is completed e.g. the International Year of the Family celebrations sub-group, the Dormant Accounts Fund sub-group, the tenth anniversary sub-group and at present the three-year plan sub-group. This has proved very effective as it ensures the work of the Centre is spread around to all members of the management committee.

A member of the management committee attends the weekly staff meetings held in the Centre for all the staff. Committee members have found this to be of great benefit in getting to know staff as well as hearing about the everyday issues that arise in the Centre.

Staff

Elizabeth King	Co-ordinator (4 days/week)
Maria Scott	Co-ordinator (1 day/week)
Bridie Walsh	Deputy co-ordinator/FAS supervisor
Imelda Carr	Administrator (Job Sharing)
Teresa Ferry	Administrator (Job Sharing)
Paddy Crampsey	Family Support Worker for refugees and asylum seekers (in conjunction with Diversity Sligo)
Charlotte Bussmann	Family support childcare worker (commenced January 2006)

Paddy Crampsey was recruited in February 2005 as a result of a successful application in co-operation with Diversity Sligo to the HSE Sligo/Leitrim Children and Young People's Committee. He was originally seconded from the HSE for one year but has just commenced his second year. He is based full-time in Globe House, the local resident's centre for asylum seekers.

In September, recruitment began for a co-ordinator to cover the one-day a week parental leave being taken by Elizabeth King. Maria Scott was appointed and took up her post in December.

Recruitment and interviews also took place for the Family Support and Childcare Worker being funded by the Dormant Accounts Fund. Charlotte Bussmann was successful and she took up her position on 4 January 2006.

FÁS Community Employment scheme (2005)

Mairead Connolly, Niamh Feeney	information
Reenagh Gallagher, Mary Hamilton, Lisa Mills, Rose McCrann, Catherine McManus, Bridie O' Doherty, Cathy Walsh, Martha Ward, Geraldine Wyvar.	childcare
Terry McDonagh	receptionist
Margaret Lang	FAS finances
John Adams	caretaker

During the year Rhena Gallagher (March), Terry McDonagh (December), Cathy Walsh (September), Martha Ward (September) and Geraldine Wyvar (February) left the scheme.

In July this year as we had not reached the number of CE participants applied for (15), FÁS advised us that we were to be amalgamated with Club 91 Ltd. Through this, five additional participants started on the scheme on 11 July 2006.

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They are:

Breege Brennan, Kenneth Coggins,
Josephine Dowd, Geraldine Fallon
Orla Gorman.

care assistants

classroom assistant

Four of these are based in Club 91 with Enda Maloney as line manager and one in St John's school with Sheila Wims as line manager. The Sligo FRC is responsible for the payment of wages and the organisation of training for these participants with Bridie Walsh, Sligo FRC being the overall supervisor.

The following is a flavour of the work we have undertaken in the Centre in the last year.

➤ Information

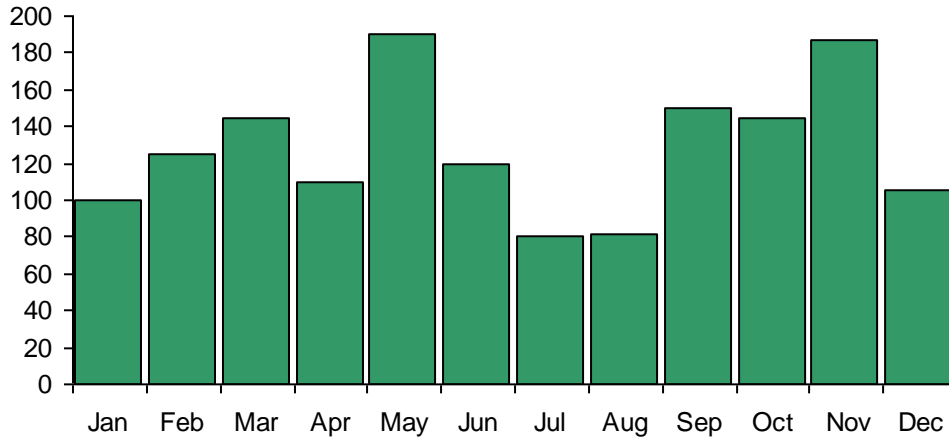
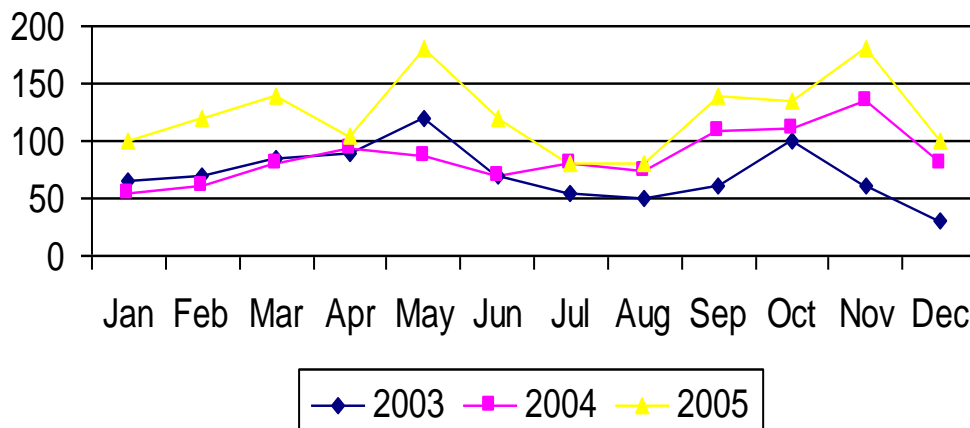


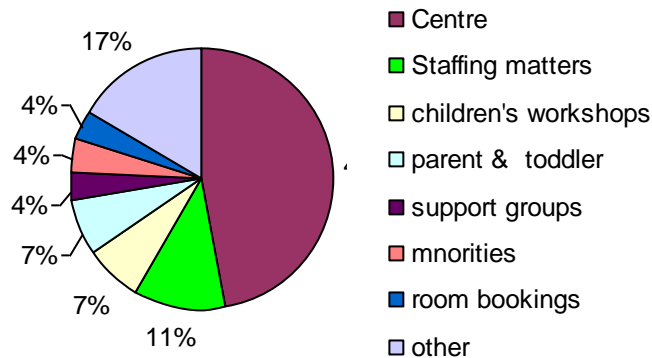
Table 1 indicates the number of enquiries we received looking for information on family related issues during 2005

One of the main reasons we set up this Centre in 1995 was to provide information on all family issues to the people of Sligo. We devised a system to monitor the amount of calls made and the content of these calls. In total we dealt with 1,347 information inquiries in 2005 up from 1,022 from the previous year.

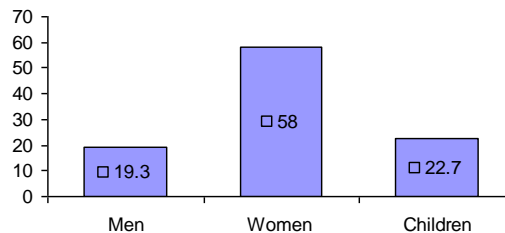
Information calls logged to the Sligo FRC 2003-2006



As indicated from the chart above there has been a significant increase in the volume of work coming through the Centre in the past three years.



The total number of visits was 3,884 (including 254 in the last week of June when the study began).



➤ Training for parents

This year, we ran a childcare training programme for the mothers in Globe House. It ran every Monday and Wednesday morning for eight weeks. Up to nineteen women attended and childcare was provided for up to twenty one children.

➤ Parent Support Groups

These include:

Lone Parent support Group – met every Tuesday morning for the first few weeks in the year, then one woman moved out of the area and the group disbanded.

Parent and Toddler group – meet every Friday morning

The 0-6 parent support group – meet on the first and occasionally third Friday of every month

Adoptive parent support group – meet on the last Wednesday of every month

Birth Parent Support Group– meet every eight to ten weeks.

➤ Workshops for children

The Saturday morning art workshop with Sean O' Hanrahan continued to be very popular throughout the year for children aged 6-10 years old.

We also ran music workshops with Anna Houston every Tuesday afternoon for the 4-6 year olds, art workshops with Martha Van Der Meulen every Thursday afternoon for the 7-10 year olds and Deirdre O'

Grady ran a very enjoyable drama workshop for parents and their toddlers every Tuesday morning.

➤ Outreach

In August we ran a summer camp in Caltragh community centre for a week. This led to further work with the children in this housing estate where we facilitated a music and art workshop every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon for the children after school from September to December culminating in a Christmas party at the end of term. We are working closely with the Sligo Borough Council to develop the work in this area.

Sligo FRC is also a member of the Estate Management Network which is made up of representatives of the Northside CDP, Sligo Borough Council, RAPID and the Sligo FRC. The aim of this group is to work with estate management committees in the North Ward, Sligo.

➤ 10th Anniversary celebrations

To celebrate the Centre's being opened ten years this year, the management committee decided to put together a book highlighting the events of the past ten years through stories, memoirs, poetry and photographs. The launch of *From Acorns to Mighty Oaks* took place in December 2005.

➤ Policy work

As part of the work with Derry Well Woman under the "Other Border" initiative, the co-ordinator attended a meeting with representatives from the Traveller community, rural women, older women and women living in poverty with the Sligo County Council. Issues that were discussed included information, access/transport, integrated planning, refuse and equality awareness. There were several preparatory meetings held prior to the meeting with the Council.

Some staff and committee members attended the three consultation meetings in March, June and November in Croke Park Conference Centre, Dublin around the FRC National Forum strategic plan.

We took part in the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC) *Right to be Included* series of seminars which looked at the issue of reforming social welfare policies and another attended a consultation on the development of a public funded childcare system also organised by the NWC.

➤ Access Visits

We provided a facility for supervised access visits for two fathers and their children.

➤ Summer camps

We organised and ran summer camps for children aged 4-6 for four weeks in the summer

➤ Family fun days/events

On the 15th May we held the annual family day to celebrate the International Day of the Family. We held Christmas parties for the adoptive parents and their children, the parent and toddler group and the children in Caltragh.

➤ Dail Na nOg:

The County Development Board organised a one day event for young people (approx 70) aged between 12 and 18 to choose 4 people to represent them at the national Dail na NOg in Croke Park Conference Centre in Dublin next month. The Sligo FRC co-ordinator facilitated a workshop on diversity and equality.

➤ NW Regional Seminar

This was held in the Radisson Hotel on 14 March 2004. It was attended by representatives of all ten FRCs in the region as well as Pat Bennett and Christina O'Connor FSA and Pakie Kelly FRC National Forum. It was an opportunity to share information and raise issues of concern to voluntary management committee members.

➤ Childcare facility Globe House

In co-operation with Diversity Sligo, Lifestart, Sligo County Childcare Committee and Springboard Project House, we submitted a funding proposal to the Refugee Integration Agency for a crèche in Globe House which was successful. Recruitment and selection for workers was undertaken at the end of 2005 and the crèche should be opened in early April 2006.

➤ Dormant Account Fund application

We were successful in obtaining funding for a family support and childcare worker. Recruitment and interviews took place in late 2005 and the worker commenced in January 2006.

➤ Evaluation Day:

The management and staff took part in a full day's review and evaluation of the work of the Centre using the SPEAK evaluation process. It was also an opportunity to look to the next three years as the three year plan is to be submitted by the end of March 2006.

➤ Strategic Planning, Evaluation and Knowledge Networking System (SPEAK);

A lot of time went into the training in the use of this system of evaluation and in compiling the information for the evaluation. It was submitted to the FSA on 30 June 2005. This will be an ongoing part of our work now.

➤ Rent negotiated

The lease for the building at 49 the Mall, Sligo was due for renegotiation in November 2005. Negotiations began in April with the landlord and

later with his estate agent. A figure was agreed and we renegotiated funding with the HSE and FSA.

➤ Referrals

We take referrals from public health nurses, social workers, hospital staff and other local community groups to our various programmes and refer service users to other agencies as required.

➤ Publicity

We produce regular newsletters and newspaper articles for local papers as well as produce fliers for events, courses, seminars etc.

➤ Membership of other organisations

We are members of the Sligo Travellers Support group, Diversity Sligo, the NWHB Children and Young People's committee, the North West Regional Forum and the Sligo County Childcare Committee, FRCs NW regional chairpersons', co-ordinators' and administrators' meetings.

➤ Representation

The Sligo FRC Co-ordinator represented the North West region in the FRC National Forum board of management.

➤ Other services

We provide meeting facilities for groups Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday nights and at other times when requested and we providing rooms to counsellors

Summary of Service Users (2005)

Programme	Adults	Children	Total
Toy library users	9	20	29
Parent & toddler group	34	41	75
0-6 parent support group	6		6
Adoptive parents support group	24	20	44
Crèche users		37	37
Art, music, drama workshops for children (Centre based)		139	139
Parent & Tots Drama and music	14	17	31
Summer Camp		51	51
Wall Mural summer camp (Caltragh)		9	9
Music and art workshops (Caltragh)		24	24
Launch of "From Acorns to Mighty Oaks"	30	5	35
Childcare course for Globe House	23		23
Lone parents support Group	4		4
Saturday group	11		11
Family fun day	45	67	112
TOTAL	200	430	630

Many of these parents and children came back several times over the year to use our services and take part in the programmes offered.

Training undertaken and conferences attended by staff members (2005)

- FETAC level 2 Social Studies (4)
- FETAC Level 2 Child Development (2)
- Reflexology (1)
- Manual and computerised accounts (1)
- Tass Books (2)
- Listening Ear training (1)
- Health and safety training (10)
- SPEAK training (co-ordinator and administrator)
- FRC National Forum Conference Croke Park, Dublin (co-ordinator and 2 committee members)
- Sligo Women's Network
- FRC National Forum Strategic Planning, March, June and November (co-ordinator, administrator and some members of management committee)
- HSE three-day management skills (co-ordinator)
- Return to education briefing session for FAS supervisors
- Consultation on the development of a publicly funded childcare system (National Women's Council of Ireland)
- Attended presentation of People in Need awards in Carrick on Shannon
- Attended presentation of donation by the Kennedy Trust Foundation in golf club in Rosses Point