

Chairpersons Report

The Sligo Family Resource Centre annual general meeting was held in March 2006. At the AGM Ursula O'Shea resigned as chairperson and I was appointed as the new chairperson. Six voluntary management committee members also resigned and three new members came on board. Thanks to Ursula and the committee members for their hard work and commitment throughout their time on the committee. I will now give you a flavour of *some* of the work undertaken in the Centre in 2006.

A new era for the Sligo Family Resource Centre began in 2006 with the start of the family support project funded by the Dormant Accounts Fund. This project devised by the management committee in the mid 1990s was finally brought to fruition in January 2006 with the employment of the family support childcare co-ordinator, the opening of *Footprints* drop-in crèche in March and the commencement of the outreach family support work in October.

In March, the Family Resource Centre submitted its three-year plan, 2006-2008 to the Family Support Agency. This was accepted and the committee was happy in the knowledge that funding had been secured for the Centre to cover overheads and some staffing costs up to December 2008.

The annual Family Fun Day was a washout due to heavy rain in May but this was not allowed to spoil the day. The children were well entertained indoors by the *magician* and staff of the Centre.

In July, the committee was successful with its application for another contract with FÁS to run a community employment scheme until July 2007. This involved the termination of employment of some of the participants of the CE scheme and new participants being employed. Increased funding was also allocated from the HSE North West to cover the cost of renting the building here on the Mall.

During July and August the playground was revamped with eco friendly tree bark replacing the stony surface. The playground was greatly enhanced by the addition of a lovely new sandpit which was finished just in time for the adoptive parents and their families' *Family Fun Day* at the end of August. The completion of this project would not have been possible without the enormous contribution from the dedicated staff.

As the year progressed there were more staff changes which added fresh ideas and created a sense of renewed energy to the work of the Centre.

In November, a very successful parenting programme was run for the mothers in Globe House residential centre for asylum seekers. Up to twenty women attended every Thursday morning and the Centre was very impressed with the turnout during these cold months.

The run-up to Christmas was exciting with new families increasingly using the Centre, in particular through *Footprints* drop-in crèche.

Training of staff for the home support work began in September and by the end of the year we were already working with three families directly in their homes with four more waiting for assessment.

In December, a committee and staff team building evening was held in the Raddison Hotel facilitated by Margaret McGarrigle. The training provided an excellent opportunity for attendees to get to know a little more about each other. The night ended with a beautiful meal.

The management committee and staff (made up of twenty five members of staff and thirteen voluntary management committee members) of Sligo FRC acknowledged the achievements of 2006 and looked forward to 2007 with enthusiasm.

For this and all the work I have not mentioned, I wish to thank all the committee members and staff for their team effort over the past year. I would like to acknowledge the staff of Ailim Community Development Support Agency for their support. I would like to extend a special thank you to our funders: FÁS, the Family Support Agency, the Health service Executive North West, the Department of Social & Family Affairs, the Vocational Education Committee, Sligo Leader Partnership, the Dormant Accounts Fund and the National Lottery for their continued support and commitment to the work of this Centre. I would also like to acknowledge the other community and voluntary groups in the area some of whom we work very closely with. I would also like to gratefully acknowledge donations received and the generous response to our Flag Day in June 2006.

Bernadette Davey
Chairperson Management Committee
March 2006 - 2007

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.

Management structure and staff

Chairperson:	Bernie Davey
Vice Chairperson:	Teresa O'Dwyer
Treasurer:	Christ Spoorenberg
Secretary:	Rebecca Treanor
Directors:	Josette Newmann, Dympna McNulty, Benny Swinbourne, Mary Ford, Chris Davis, Marian Hargadon, Ceri Stacks Bailey, Ursula O' Shea.

The management committee is made up of thirteen volunteers. In 2005/6 three 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 five members of the management committee, the co-ordinator and CE supervisor. 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 for employment issues.

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 recruitment of a researcher for the family support project. 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 every Thursday 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.

Sligo FRC Staff

Elizabeth King	Co-ordinator (4 days/week)
Maria Scott	Co-ordinator (1 day/week)
Bridie Walsh	FÁS supervisor (job sharing since October 2006)
Sarah Cleasby	FÁS supervisor (job sharing since October 2006)
Imelda Carr	Project administrator (Job Sharing)
Teresa Ferry	Project administrator (Job Sharing up to November 2006)
Cathy McGowan	Project administrator (Job Sharing from January 2007)
Charlotte Bussmann	Family support childcare co-ordinator
Rose McCrann	Drop-in creche assistant from January 2007
Paddy Crampsey	Family Support Worker for refugees and asylum seekers (in conjunction with Diversity Sligo)

FÁS Community Employment scheme (2006)

Sligo FRC participants

Mairéad Connolly, Niamh Feeney, Nicola Loftus	Information
Mary Hamilton, Bridie Doherty, Catherine McManus, Lisa Mills, Rose McCrann, Ashling Jinks, Helen Fox, Geraldine Wyvar, Mary Morris, Ita Meehan, Mary Keeney, Sarha Deadman, Breege Brennan	Childcare
Catherine Burnside	Receptionist
Margaret Lang	FAS finances
John Adams	caretaker

Club 91 CE participants:

Breege Brennea, Kenneth Coggins, John McLoughlin, Josephine Dowd, Geraldine Fallon, Liam O Shaugnessy	Care assistants
Orla Gorman	Classroom assistant

During the year Mairéad Connolly, Catherine McManus, Josephine Dowd, Geraldine Fallon (July), Teresa Ferry, Lisa Mills, Rose McCrann and Breege Brennan (November) John McLoughlin and Liam O Shaugnessy (December) left the CE scheme.

Overview

The following is a description of some of the work undertaken by the Centre in the last year.

Centre Activity

Part of the role of the Sligo FRC information is to collate the number of telephone calls and the number of people who visit the Centre every day. These figures give an account of the activity of the Centre over the year and enables comparisons with previous years.

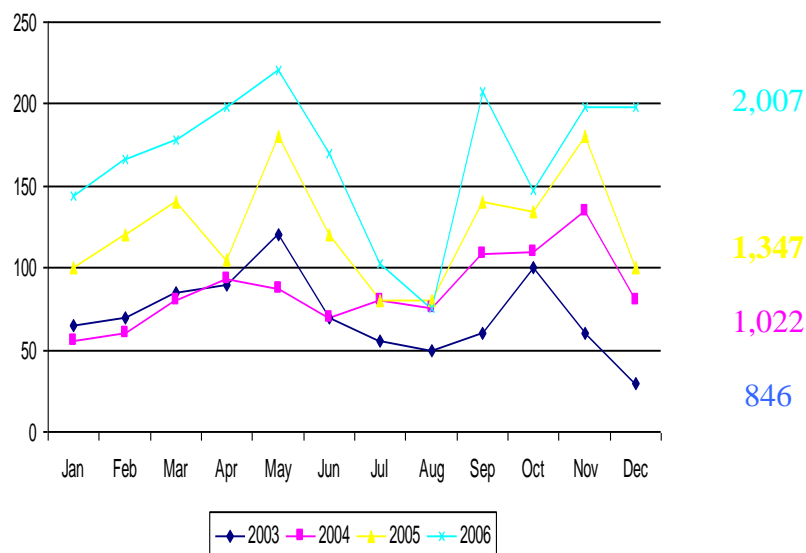


Table 1 indicates the number of telephone calls received over in the past four years

As indicated from the tables above, peak months in relation to telephone calls to the Centre are in May, June, September and November. There has been a significant yearly increase in the volume of work coming through the Centre in the past four years with the greatest increase being in 2006. This we feel is mainly due to the increase in the number of activities in the Centre with support groups, workshops, parenting, minority groups and access visits for parents and children accounting for a total of 26% of calls to the Centre and to *Footprints* drop-in crèche which accounts for 12 % of the calls (see breakdown of calls below).

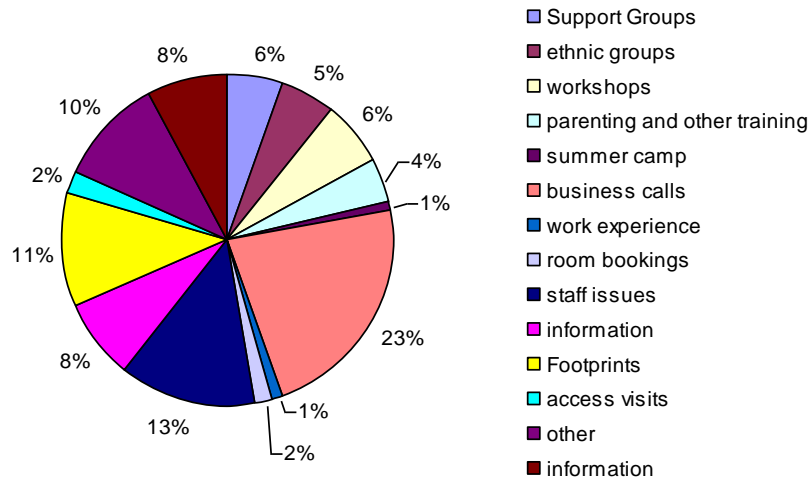
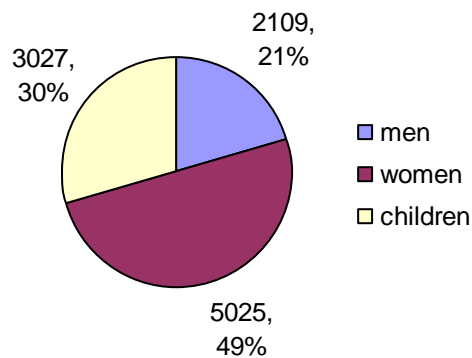


Table 3 give a breakdown of the calls made to the Centre in 2006

The system of counting visitors was started in June 2005, therefore comparative figures with the previous years are only an estimate. 3,884 people visited in the last six months of 2005 making it an increase of approximately 2,393 visitors to the Centre in 2006. The breakdown of these numbers is charted below.



10,161 Total number

Table 4 gives a breakdown of the users of the Centre

The percentage of men using the Centre is up 1.8% from 19.2% in 2005 and the percentage number of children is up 7.3% from 22.7%¹.

Information

One of the main reasons this Centre was established in 1995 was to provide information on all family issues to the people of Sligo. With the assistance of a management committee member with librarian skills, a system was devised to monitor the calls received and the content of these calls. In total 160 calls relating to

¹ The figures from 2005 were recorded from June of that year only.

information were received. The following is a breakdown of these calls. Calls listed under “other” include those relating to autism, bullying, health, eating disorders, elderly, family legal issues, finance, housing, addresses, divorce, teenagers, racism and suicide.

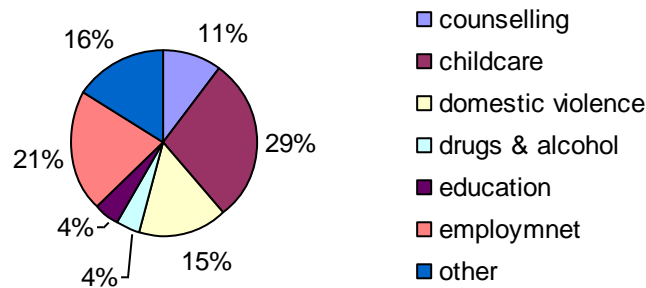


Table 5 represents the breakdown of information calls made to the centre

Parent Support Groups

These include:

The *lone parent support group* met every Wednesday afternoon for most of the year. The Sligo FRC has also been involved with the Pathways to Employment for People Parenting Alone (PEPPA) project.

“It was great to meet other lone parents and find out how they cope with childrearing”.

The *parent and toddler drama and parent and toddler group* meet every Tuesday and Friday mornings. The drama group has been particularly popular with both the parents and their toddlers.

The *adoptive parent support group* meet on the last Wednesday of every month. This year the group organised a family fun day at the end of August, a seminar in October and a Christmas party in December.

“found the seminar very useful – it gives me a lot to think about”

The *birth parent support group* meet every eight to ten weeks. A second facilitated group began in September and they are meeting every three to four weeks. An evaluation of the work of this group was undertaken and will be available in 2007.

The *fathers and children group* – Five workshops were organised for fathers and children during the year – they included drumming, a treasure trail in Hazelwood, kite making, bird table making and Christmas decorations.

Footprints Drop-in crèche and family support

This project is funded by the Dormant Accounts Fund. In total there were 66 families with 86 children catered for by *Footprints* drop-in crèche with a total of 695 sessions. Of these, 29 children (33%) were referred from the HSE and other agencies. The remainder were self referrals.

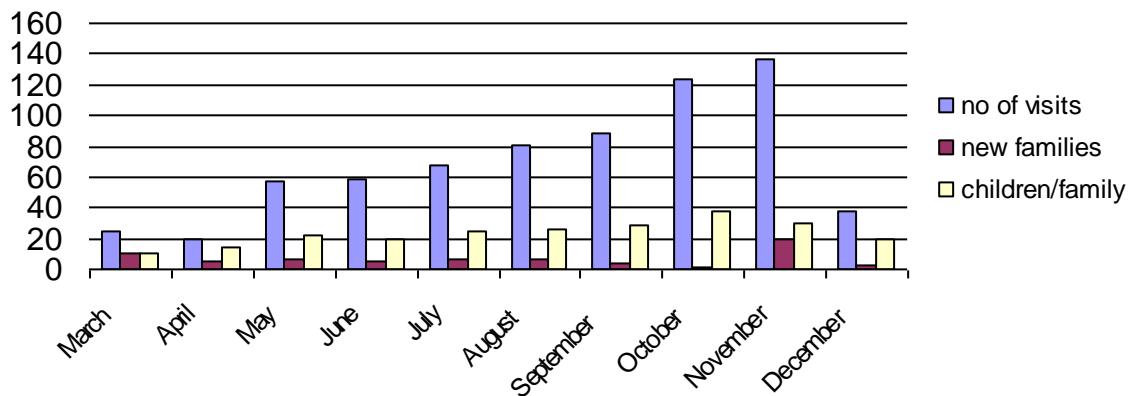


Table 6 illustrates the numbers of visits by children to *Footprints* drop-in crèche, the monthly numbers of new families and the numbers of individual families.

The home support aspect of this project commenced in October with the training of the nine community employment scheme participants to work as home support workers. By the end of the year the service supported two families directly in the home referred by the HSE social work department and three families were referred just before the Christmas break. Claire Galligan was employed in November to undertake an evaluation of the whole project. This will be completed by the end of 2007.

Training for parents

This year, three parenting programmes were organised by the Sligo FRC, with thirty two parents nineteen of whom were asylum seekers. They included the nought to six parenting programme in April, "Under the Gooseberry Bush" parenting course in May and Positive Parenting in November (funded by the HSE Fás Le Cheile initiative).

"it went beyond my expectations and was very interesting, informative and beneficial"

Workshops for children

The Saturday morning art workshop with Sean O' Hanrahan continued throughout the year for children aged 8-10 years old. Art workshops with Martha Van Der Meulen ran every Thursday afternoon for the 7-10 year olds and Deirdre Gaule ran a workshop for parents and their toddlers every Tuesday morning.



Fathers and children treasure hunt in Hazelwood



summer camp July 2006

Outreach

In 2005, the Sligo FRC first began outreach work in Caltragh Crescent housing estate. This year the Centre ran after school music and art workshops for children aged 4-6 and 7-9 respectively.

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. Funding was sourced by the Northside CDP to research the needs in six designated social housing estates. The research was completed with a strategic workplan in place for the various agencies including the Sligo FRC. The report will be launched in 2007 and the workplan put into action.

Summer camps

Summer camps for children aged 4-6 for four weeks were held in the summer. Thirty eight children attended.

He really enjoyed it and was sad when it was over"

Family fun days/events

On the 15th May, the annual family fun day to celebrate the International Day of the Family was held in the Centre. A second family fun day for adopted children and their families was held at the end of August. In June, the Centre organised a picnic

Sligo Family Resource Centre

in Kevinsforth for the parent and toddler group and the parents and children who use *Footprints* drop-in crèche. There were also Christmas parties for the adoptive parents and their children and the parent and toddler group, while the parents from the parent and toddler group had two social evenings.



Footprints and parent & toddler day out in Kevinsfort



waiting for the magician – Family Fun Day

Ethnic Minorities

The family support worker received a second year secondment from the HSE to work with the families in Globe House. By the end of 2006, he had worked with seventy five families supporting them to access childcare, schools for children and adult education and recreational activities for adults and children.

Sligo FRC in co-operation with Diversity Sligo, Lifestart, Sligo County Childcare Committee and Springboard Project Resource House, set up a crèche in Globe House, residential unit for asylum seekers which was opened in March 2006. Funded by the HSE and employed by the Sligo County Childcare Committee, two staff members were employed and the crèche catered for up to thirty children aged one to three years.

The Sligo FRC has been involved with the Sligo Travellers Support Group through representation on the board of management. In co-operation with the Northside Community Development Project the Centre is involved with a Traveller Work Placement Scheme through which a Traveller woman has been employed for twelve weeks.

Training undertaken and conferences attended by staff and committee members (2006) *Numbers of people involved presented in brackets*

- ECDL (4)
- Occupational First Aid (10)
- Grievance, disciplinary, bullying and harassment HSE (1)
- Dealing with Conflict Ballymote FRC (3)
- Advanced ECDL web design (1)
- Digital photography (2)
- Dealing with children with autism (8)
- FETAC Level 5 Working in Childcare (2)
- Communications FETAC level 5 (1)
- Sligo CCC and HSE special needs seminar (3).
- Legislation for childcare providers organised by the SCCC (1)
- CE supervisor's Training (1)
- Fire Training (all staff)
- Parenting seminar HSE (3)
- Tas Books (2)
- Family support work (9)
- Buntús Start (6)
- First Aid (8)
- Child Protection (2)
- Child Development (4)
- Early childhood education (2)
- Health and Safety (all staff)
- Management committee training (4)
- HSE Attachment: Theory to Practice (1 and 1 parent)
- DSFA funding seminar (1)
- Póbal reporting mechanisms workshop (1)
- FSA conference volunteerism (1)
- Equal Opportunities for Childcare Provision celebrations Sligo CCC (1)
- Consultation session organised by WAVES and the Rape Crisis Centre re 16 days of action against violence against women (1)
- Launch of the Report from the National conference HSE west *Addressing the mental health needs of minority ethnic groups and asylum seekers in Ireland today* (1)

Summary of Service Users (2006)²

Programme	Adults	Children	Total
Toy library users	8	12	20
Parent & toddler group incl drama	41	47	88
Father and children workshops	21	33	54
Adoptive parents support group	66	32	98
<i>Footprints</i> users	115	86	201
Art, music, drama workshops for children (Centre based)		57	57
Art & Music workshops for children based in Caltragh		26	26
Summer Camp		38	38
Parenting courses	32		32
Lone parents support group	5		5
Birth Parents support group	8		8
Family fun day	45	68	113
TOTAL	341	399	740

Many of these parents and children came back several times over the year to use our services and take part in the programmes offered. This explains the difference in figures with the number of visits to the Centre (10,161)

² These figures do not include all the visitors to the Centre, the night groups, the training groups and others