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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.

1.0 Brief overview of 2007 in the Sligo FRC

The first quarter of 2007 was a busy time for the staff of the Sligo FRC. The family support project was continually increasing its numbers of families availing of both Footprints drop-in crèche and the outreach family support in the home. Work began on the Family Fun Day which was brought forward to April this year and the parenting seminar that was held in May. Negotiations with the HSE social work department with regard to a specific project with a family in South Sligo area were successful and Sligo FRC employed two home support workers in July to work with this family. Preparations were also under way for a parenting programme in April, the summer camps (July) and the afterschool and Saturday morning art classes.

At the AGM in March 2007 Bernie Davey agreed to remain on as Chairperson. We lost three of our committee members and four new members joined.

In July we were awarded with another contract with FÁS to run until July 2008. We took on 11 new staff members. In total we had 14 CE staff and lost 18 during 2007. This gave the Sligo FRC a total staff number of 24.

The second half of the year was dominated by the change around in the Centre with the painting of the building and new floor covering throughout. The back office was converted into a Family Room and Toy Library while the FÁS supervisors and information workers were relocated to the top floor. Meanwhile part of the baby sleeping room was converted into a store room.

We ran a second parenting course – this one for parents of teenagers in September/October a follow-up to the parenting seminar in May. We continued with the parent and toddler groups on Tuesday and Friday mornings as well as the afterschool and Saturday morning art class. We also co-ordinated three afterschool activities in Caltragh community centre with funding we received from the Department of Social and Family Affairs in 2006. These included table tennis and art for 4-7 and 7-10 year olds. In addition the employee handbook was updated and all staff members received their own copy.

By December of 2007 we had contributed to the Evaluation Report of the family support project funded by the Dormant Accounts Fund and secured funding from the

HSE for the continuation of this project until July 2008. We also produced a calendar for 2008 and disseminated it to over 400 families who have used our Centre in the past two years. We had two busy Christmas parties one for the adoptive parents and their families and a second for the parents and toddlers from the Tuesday and Friday groups. In addition, the parents from the parent and toddler group had two social evenings during the year.

2.0 Management structure and staff

Chairperson:	Bernie Davey
Vice Chairperson:	Marian Hargadon
Treasurer:	Christ Spoorenberg
Secretary:	Rebecca Treanor
Directors:	Josette Newmann, Dympna McNulty, Benny Swinbourne, Mary Ford, Chris Davis, Jim O' Connor, Mary Kelly and Ruth Campbell.

The management committee is made up of thirteen volunteers. In 2007, four new members joined the committee.

The executive sup-group 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, a sub-group is established of two to three committee members working with staff in the event of a specific piece of work to be undertaken and then disbanded once the work is completed. This year we had one such sub-group who were involved in updating the employee handbook. 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 Wednesday for all the staff.

3.0 Staff

Elizabeth King	Co-ordinator (4 days/week)
Maria Scott	Co-ordinator (1 day/week)
Bridie Walsh	FÁS supervisor (job sharing)
Sarah Cleasby	FÁS supervisor (job sharing)
<i>Imelda¹ Carr</i>	Project administrator (Job Sharing resigned May 2007)
Cathy McGowan	Project administrator (Job Sharing)
Connie Ballantine	Project administrator (Job Sharing since August 2007)
Charlotte Bussmann	Family support childcare co-ordinator
Rose McCrann	Drop-in creche assistant (20 hours/week)
Christine Coyne	Home support worker (since July 2007) (25 hours/week)
Sue Coleman	Home support worker (since July 2007) (25 hours/week)

FÁS Community Employment scheme participants (2006)

<i>Niamh Feeney</i> and <i>Nicola Loftus</i> replaced by Michelle McManus, Audrey Smylie	Information
Mary Hamilton, Bridie O' Doherty, Sarha Deadman, <i>Helen Fox, Geraldine Wyvar, Mary Morris, Ita Meehan, Mary Keeney, Breege Brennan</i> replaced by Ann Boyd, Joan Hargidan, Ann O' Donoghue, Audrey Rooney, Bayan Orang, Maureen Scanlon and Michelle McArdle	Childcare
<i>Catherine Burnside</i> replaced by Lorraine Downes	Receptionist
<i>Margaret Lang</i> replaced by Claire McLoughlin	FAS finances
<i>Tony McHugh</i> replaced by Ian O' Neill	caretaker
<i>Club 91 CE participants:</i>	
<i>Breege Brennan, Kenneth Coggins, John McLoughlin, Josephine Dowd, Geraldine Fallon, Liam O Shaugnessy</i>	Care assistants
<i>Orla Gorman</i>	Classroom assistant

¹ Names of staff written in blue left during 2007

Students/Volunteers

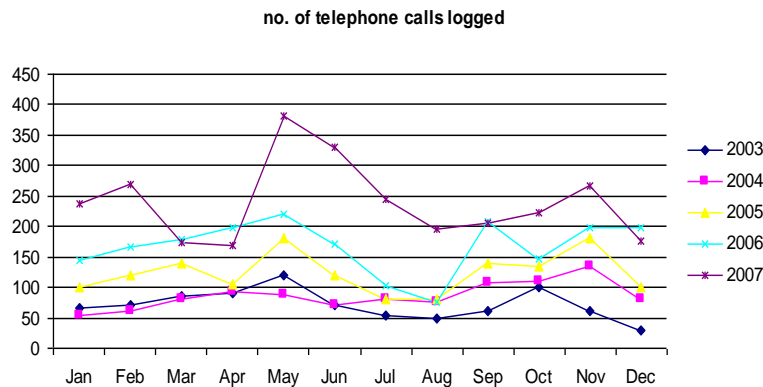
Winnie Ward	Traveller Work Placement Scheme in co-operation with Northside CDP
Catherine Downey	4 th Year, St Angela's College, Sligo
Marie Ward	Sligo Travellers Support Group Primary health care programme
Lisa Ward	Sligo Travellers Support Group Primary health care programme
Olivia Gilgunn	Transition year, St Claire's Comprehensive School, Manorhamilton
Niamh Flynn,	Transition year, St Claire's Comprehensive School, Manorhamilton
Ann Marie Duffy	Nu Haven Enterprise Centre

4 Overview

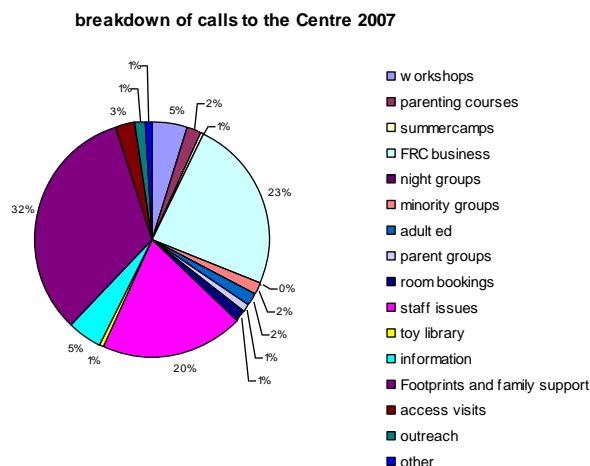
The following is a flavour of the work we have undertaken in the Centre in the last year.

4.1 Centre Activity

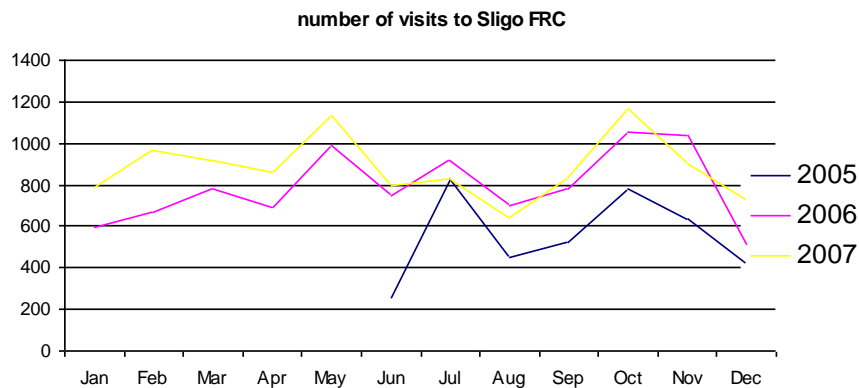
To give an idea of the activity of the Centre, the information officers collate the numbers of telephone calls in and out of the Centre and the numbers of people who visit the Centre every day. These figures give the reader an overview of the activity of the Centre over the year and enables comparisons with previous years.



As indicated from the tables above, there has been a significant yearly increase in the volume of work coming through the Centre in the past five years with the greatest increase being in 2007. This we feel is mainly due to the increase in the number of activities in the Centre with support groups (1%), toy library (1%), parent groups (1%) summer camps (1%), ethnic minorities (2%), parenting programmes (2%), adult education, access visits (3%) for parents and children and children's workshops (5%) accounting for a total of 16% of calls to the Centre and to *Footprints* which accounts for 32% of the calls (see breakdown of calls below).

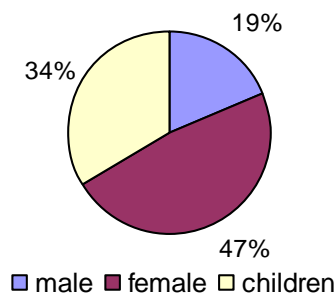


The system of counting visitors was started in June 2005. In 2006, there were 9,466 visits to the Centre and in 2007 there were 10,590 an increase of 10.6%.



The breakdown of these numbers is charted below.

breakdown of Centre users



The percentage of men and women using the Centre is down 2% from 2005, and the percentage number of children is up 4%. This is linked to the increase in the use of *Footprints* drop-in crèche and the increase in the numbers of children taking part in the parent and toddler groups and afterschool and Saturday morning art classes.

4.2 Parent Support Groups

These include:

Parent and toddler groups – There is a parent and toddler session every Tuesday and Friday mornings. The Tuesday drama group has been particularly popular with both the parents and their toddlers. The Friday parent and toddler group was revamped during the year and receives many parents with very young children in particular families from Eastern Europe.

Sligo Family Resource Centre

Adoptive parent support group – They continue to meet on the last Wednesday of every month. This year the group organised a family fun day at the end of August and a Christmas party in December. They had an adoptive father as guest speaker one evening. An evaluation of this group was carried out in the Summer of 2007 with questionnaire to all 40 families on the data base.

“I have found the adoptive parents support group fantastic and look forward to the meetings once a month”
(quote from the evaluation report 2007)

Birth parent support group– this group now meets independently. The Sligo FRC received funding from the DSFA to support their activities and the Sligo FRC continues to facilitate the group with ongoing support.

“Billy [the storyteller] entertained both myself and the kids”
(quote from a Dad on the storytelling workshop)

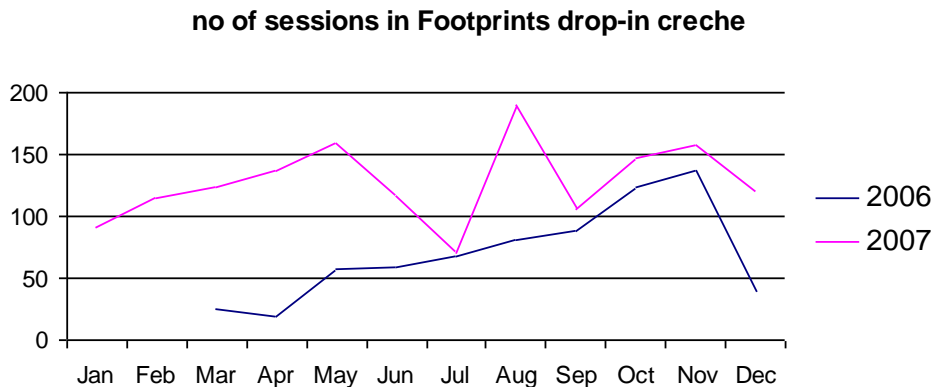
Fathers and children group – three workshops were organised for fathers and children during the year – they included drumming, sand castle building and storytelling. At the story telling session, the fathers had a session on their own with a facilitator to discuss ways in which the Sligo FRC can best support them as Dads. This will be followed up with two parenting programme: Raising Boys for Fathers and Raising Girls for Fathers in 2008.

4.3 Family Support Project

This project, which includes *Footprints* drop-in crèche and the home support work, was funded by the Dormant Accounts Fund 2006 – 2007. In the autumn of 2007 we successfully negotiated with the HSE to continue funding this project until the end of July 2008. Claire Galligan was employed in November 2006 to undertake an evaluation of the whole project. This was completed by the end of 2007 and the report launched in February 2008. The findings were very positive. An additional project was negotiated with the HSE during 2007. This involved the Sligo FRC, with funding received from the HSE, employing two home support workers to work 50 hours per week with one particular family. The workers were employed in July 2007. An evaluation of this initiative will be undertaken in 2008.

4.3.1 Footprints drop-in crèche

The Footprints drop-in crèche has been going from strength to strength with the increasing numbers of families using the service.



By the end of December 2007, 135 families with on average 35 families per month had used the service with a total of 2,268 sessions (a session being up to 3.5 hours). Of these, 38% children were referred from the HSE and other agencies. The remainder were self referrals.

4.3.2 Home support work

“From a questionnaire survey that was carried out with families, they are very happy with the home support service they are receiving, and feel that it responds to their needs”. (Sligo FRC Evaluation Report p.8)

The home support aspect of this project commenced in October 2006 with nine community employment staff members being trained to work as home support workers. By the end of the 2007, the Sligo FRC had worked with sixteen families directly in the home. 81% were referred by HSE health professionals with the remainder being self referrals. On average there are 20 hours per week of direct contact with families through the home support work.

4.4 Training for parents

This year, we ran two parenting programmes with 19 parents attending. They included positive parenting (April) and Living with Teens (September). These were funded by the HSE Health Promotion Unit Fás Le Cheile initiative.

In May we ran a seminar for parents of teenagers. Guest speakers

*“Listening to youth leaders I got a better understanding of how to deal with my teenager.”
(parent attending)*

for this included Fr. Peter McVerry, Mary Roche, HSE and Sligo Youth Council representatives: Niamh Chapman, Gavin Cawley and Aidrian Clarke.

seminar in May 2007)

4.5 Workshops for children

The Saturday morning art workshop with Seán O' Hanrahán continued throughout the year for children aged 4-8 years old. In the autumn this increased to two sessions every Saturday morning as the interested in the classes increased. We also ran art workshops with Martha Van Der Meulen every Thursday afternoon for the 4-7 year olds and Deirdre Gaule ran a workshop for parents and their toddlers (funded by the VEC) every Tuesday morning.

4.6 Outreach work in Caltragh and North Ward

In 2005 we began outreach work in Caltragh Crescent housing estate and have continued ever since. This year we ran after-school table tennis and two art workshops for children, one with Liz Byrne and one with Seán O Hanrahán. .

The research on six borough council estates in the North Ward was completed and the report launched with a strategic workplan in place for the various agencies including the Sligo FRC. Work on this plan has been slow to date.

4.7 Summer camps

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

4.8 Family fun days/events

In April, we held the annual family fun day to celebrate the International Day of the Family. A second family fun day for adopted children and their families was held at the end of August. In June, we had a picnic in Kevinsforth for the parent and toddler group and the parents and children who use *Footprints* drop-in crèche. We also held 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.

4.9 Ethnic Minorities

The family support worker secondment from the HSE to work with the families in Globe House under the management of the Sligo FRC ended in February 2007. However, the Sligo FRC continues to link in with his work through our involvement in Diversity Sligo and the Globe House crèche steering group.

In co-operation with the Northside Community Development Project the Sligo FRC was involved with a Traveller Work Placement Scheme through which a Traveller woman has been employed for twelve weeks early in the year. We also facilitated work placements for the participants of the Sligo Traveller Support Group primary health care programme.

4.10 Other initiatives

During 2007, the Centre was painted and had new floor covering throughout. The **Parent's Room** was created on the lower floor and is available to parents who want to take a break from the hustle and bustle of town, to feed/change their baby or to meet other parents. The new revamped **toy library** is also located in this room. Another room to be redecorated was the **Noreen Hickey Suite** (formerly known as the "Orange Room"). This is now being made available for access visits. To accommodate equipment one of the counsellor's rooms was divided to create storage space. Outside is the **playground** which now has bark where the stones were and new safety tiles to ensure safe play for the children who use the Centre. All of this meant that the **information office** and the **CE supervisor's** office had to relocate to the top floor.

Training undertaken and conferences attended by staff and committee members (2006)

Numbers of people involved presented in brackets

- Fetac Level 5 Early Childhood Education (2)
- Fetac Level 5 Child Development (4)
- Fetac Level 5 Caring for Children (3)
- Fetac Level 5 Special Needs (2)
- Fetac Level 5 Communications (2)
- Fetac Level 5 Lifestyle planning (1)
- Fetac Level 5 Arts and crafts (3)
- Pre-nursing (anatomy & physiology) (1)
- Introduction to child protection (2)
- Basic Computers (1)
- Computers for improvers (1)
- TAS Books (4)
- Food Hygiene (3)
- Business Studies secretarial (BTEI) (1)
- Safepass (1)
- Literacy training (2)
- Establishing a garden from scratch (1)
- Health and safety (17)
- Manual Handling (13)
- Dealing with challenging behaviour (18)
- Information provision (2)
- Service provision (14)
- Home support training (9)
- Summer Camp Training (9)
- Team Building /personal development (18)
- First Aid (10)
- Update on occupational first aid (4)
- Buntús Start training (10)
- Fork Lift Training (1)
- Project skills training (14)
- BA Family and community studies (1)
- New childcare regulations (2)
- Mental health issues (8)
- Job seeking skills (3)
- Thesaurus pay roll system (5)

Summary of Service Users (2007)²

Programme	Adults	Children	Total
Parent & toddler group drama	27	32	59
Parent & toddler group free play	44	56	100
Father and children workshops	16	28	44
Adoptive parents support group	28	21	49
<i>Footprints users</i>	131	102	233
<i>Home support users</i>	15	32	47
Art, workshops for children (Centre based)		49	49
Art & Music workshops for children based in Caltragh		16	16
Parent and toddler drama in Caltragh	18	23	41
Summer Camp		31	31
Parenting courses 0-6 parenting and living with teens	19		19
Family fun day	36	50	86
Parenting seminar for parents of teenagers	35		35
TOTAL	369	440	809

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

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