

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 2008 in the Sligo FRC

In 2008, the numbers of people using the Centre was up again on previous year (13%) while the number of phone calls into the Centre was up by 24%. Parent support in the form of the parent and toddler drama group continued to grow and from September was held in the Centre two days a week. We also successfully ran a parenting programme for over twenty fathers and a positive parenting programme for the parents in Globe House with ten participants.

The official opening of Footprints, the toy library, family room and the launch of the evaluation of the family support project took place on 01 February with the FSA and HSE being well represented as well as many parents and children. Rose McCrann was made full time in Footprints which gave this project more scope to develop its outreach programme and Mary Hamilton was employed in July for 10 hours per week as home support worker. In addition, the playground received a facelift with chequered mats over the concreted area. As well as that numbers availing of this service was up on last year.

We had the biggest crowd yet at the family fun day in April and again we were lucky with the weather. In May, we had a very sunny day for the father and children's circus workshop which was very well attended and greatly enjoyed. That month also saw the staff and board of management coming together to begin to work on the FSA three year plan which was eventually submitted at the end of October. In June, we ran summercamps for children aged 5-8 for three weeks which included a one day trip to Kevinsfort playground.

In August we began a new community employment scheme with ten new participants being taken on. This meant of course that we also had to lose twelve of our existing participants some of whom went on to work in childcare and other caring professions while others went back to education. In September, we had a very enjoyable team building day in Lough Key forest park with all the staff in attendance.

Throughout the year, training for staff and CE participants was ongoing with two members of staff attending third level courses. Many others are studying for their FETAC Level 5 childcare.

Policy work was undertaken in the form of lobbying on the issue of Garda clearance. Sligo FRC was also on the Area Implementation Team of the local RAPID programme steering group and the County Development Board Social Inclusion Measures group (representing the four FRCs in Sligo).

2.0 Management structure and staff

Chairperson:	Bernie Davey
Vice Chairperson:	Marian Hargadon
Treasurer:	Ruth Campbell
Secretary:	Rebecca Treanor
Directors:	Josette Newmann, Christ Spoorenberg, Chris Davis, Jim O' Connor, Mary Kelly, Ann Tully and Martina Kilgallon.

The management committee is made up of twelve volunteers. In 2008, three volunteers resigned and two new members joined the committee.

The executive sub-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 two sub-groups, one who did the work on SPEAK and the other who worked on the three year plan. This has proved very effective as it ensures the work of the Centre is spread around to all members of the management committee.

The board of management met with the FSA in June 2008 to evaluate the work of the previous three years and discuss the new three year plan. The three year plan was submitted at the end of October.

The application to the FSA for a development worker was unsuccessful in the summer due to budgetary constraints of the FSA.

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)
Cathy McGowan	Administrator (job sharing up to July 08 then full time)
Connie Ballantine	Adiminstrator (job sharing left July 08)
Charlotte Bussmann	Family support childcare co-ordinator
Rose McCrann	Drop-in creche assistant
Chris Coyne	Home support worker resigned Oct 2008 and was replaced by
Tara Scott	Home support worker (since Oct 2008) (25 hours/week)
Sue Coleman	Home support worker (25 hours/week)
Mary Hamilton	Home support worker (10 hours/week from July 08)

FÁS Community Employment scheme participants (2007/8)¹

Michelle McManus , Audrey Smylie replaced by Susan McGarry, and Evelyn Myles	Information
Bridie O' Doherty, Sarha Deadman, Ann Boyd, Maureen Scanlon, Joan Hargidan , Ann O' Donoghue , Audrey Rooney , Ita Meehan , Teresa Blenkey , Bayan Orang , Mary Hamilton and Michelle McArdle replaced by Heather Phibbs, Mary West, Louise Kavanagh, Deirdre Nestor, Ronak Palani and Myra Sharkey.	Childcare
Lorraine Downes replaced by Mary Coughlan	Receptionist
Claire McLoughlin	FAS finances
Ian O' Neill replaced by Alan Fox	caretaker

Student

Michelle Lindsay	IT Sligo third year BA early childhood development
Margaret Lang	Business and Accountancy IT Sligo

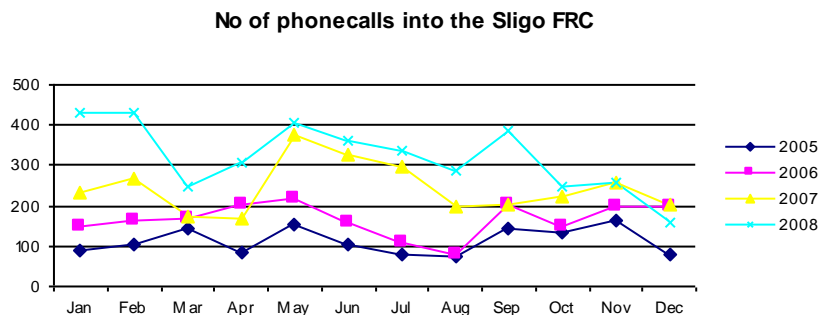
¹ Those written in blue left the Centre during 2008

4 Overview

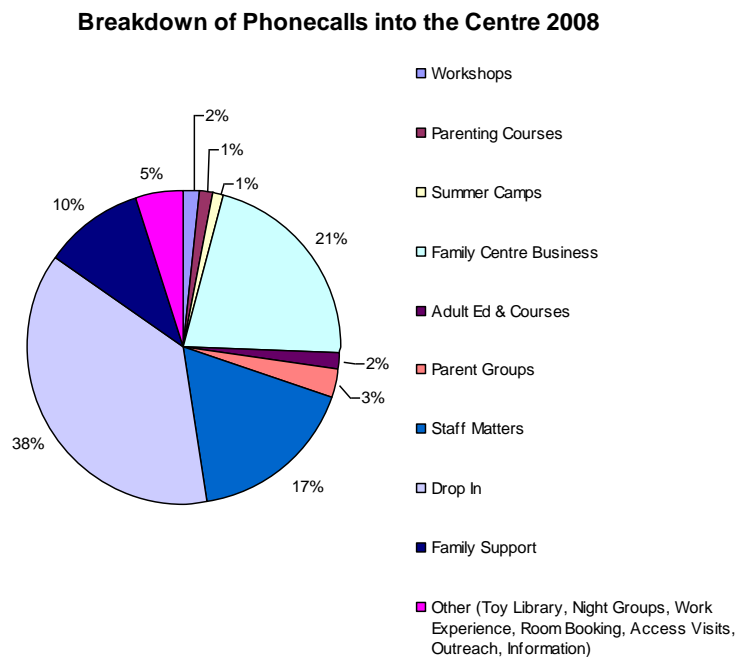
The following is a flavour of the work we have undertaken in the Centre in the last year.

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, enable comparisons with previous years and are used as one of the indicators of the work undertaken by the Centre.

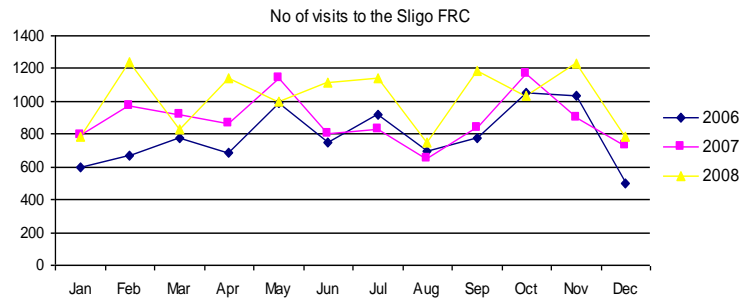


As indicated from the tables above, there has been a significant yearly increase in the volume of work coming through the Centre in the past four years with the greatest increase being in 2008.

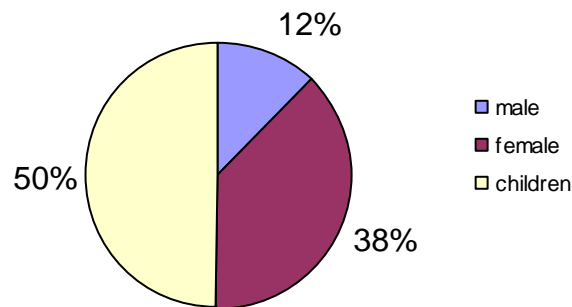


We have also devised a system for breaking down the calls into the Centre. These are recorded in the pie chart above.

The system of counting visitors was started in June 2005. In 2006, there were 9,466 visits to the Centre, 2007 there were 10,590 an increase of 10.6% and in 2008, 12,234 (up 23%).



The breakdown of these numbers is charted below.



4.2 Parent Support Groups

These include:

Parent and toddler groups – There are parent and toddler sessions every Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. The Tuesdays and Wednesdays facilitated drama group has been particularly popular with both the parents and their toddlers. In these sessions, the parents and toddlers take part in singing, dancing, rhymes, mime and there are storytelling sessions. The Friday parent and toddler group was revamped during the year and receives parents with very young children in particular families from Eastern Europe.

Adoptive parent group – they continue to meet on the last Monday of every month. This year the group organised a family fun day at the end of August and a Christmas party in December. The group was successful in obtaining €2,600 in funding from the HSE some of

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which was used towards the seminar which was held for adoptive parents in the Sligo Park Hotel in October facilitated by Ruth Kelly² Senior Practitioner, Adoption Service in Wexford.

Birth parent support group – this group met three times during 2008 with a similar group from Donegal in 2008. It was facilitated by the social workers from St Attracta's and St Mura's Adoption Agencies and the Sligo FRC co-ordinator.

"I have spoken more about my kids to other men in the course of this session than ever previously" *Fathers and children group* – In 2008, there were two workshops for fathers and children: circus skills (May) and Christmas decorations (December) and two parenting programmes: Raising Boys for Fathers and Raising Girls for Fathers held in March. There are up to sixty fathers now on the data base.

(quote from a Dad on the Raising Boys for Dads parenting programme)

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. 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 was undertaken in 2008³.

4.3.1 Footprints drop-in crèche

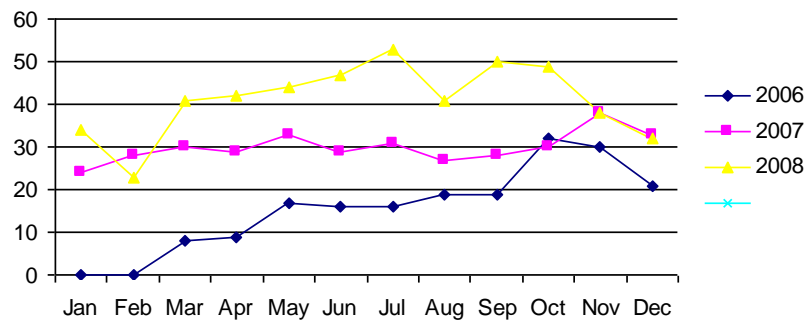
The Footprints drop-in crèche has been going from strength to strength with the increasing numbers of families using the service.

By the end of December 2008, 226 families with on average 41 families per month had used the service. Of the 91 new families in 2008, 26% were referred from the HSE and other agencies. The remainder were self referrals.

² Ruth 's publications include: *A Study of Intercountry Adoption Outcomes in Ireland (2007)* : Greene, S., Kelly, R., Nixon, E., Kelly, G., Borska, Z., Murphy, S., Daly, A., Whyte, J., Murphy, C. *Adoption Board Motherhood Silenced, Reflections of Natural Mothers on Adoption Reunion, (2005)* (Liffey Press); *Emerging Voices, The Birth Mother's Perspective in Adoption, (2008)* in *International Advances for Adoption Research and Practice (2008 in print)* Wrobel, G., Neil, E., Haworth Press).

³ Galligan, Claire: *Interim review of the Sligo FRC/HSE Specific Family Support Project, April 2008*

No of Families using Footprints



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 2008, the Sligo FRC had worked with twenty nine families directly in the home eighteen of these being new families in 2008. The majority of these are referred by HSE health professionals. With funding received from Footprints income, we recruited a home support worker to work for 10 hours per week. The successful candidate was previously employed in the Sligo FRC CE scheme. On average there are 28 hours per week of direct contact with families through the home support work.

4.3.2.1 Home support specific project

This is a project where we work very closely with the HSE Tubbercurry social work department and have employed two workers to work with one specific family for fifty hours per week. An evaluation of this project was undertaken by Claire Galligan, independent evaluator in April 2008. *“They showed us how to love as a family” and “I have confidence in me and the children and we are growing together as a family”* (quote from the mother in the family).

4.3.2.2 Home support for parents with learning disabilities

This is a project we are currently working on with the adult learning disability unit in Markievicz House. Some meetings were held in late 2008 where the possibility of supporting parents through a parenting programme and then to implement the learning from the programme by home support workers was discussed. This project is still in its infancy.

4.4 Training for parents

This year, we ran three parenting programmes. One was for parents in Globe House, one for fathers of boys and one for fathers of girls. These were funded by the HSE Health Promotion Unit Fás Le Cheile initiative.

4.5 Workshops for children

The Saturday morning art workshop with Seán O' Hanrahán continued throughout the year for children aged 5-8 years old. We ran art workshops with Martha Van Der Meulen every Thursday afternoon for the 4-7 year olds.

4.6 Outreach work in Caltragh

In 2008, we ran after-school table tennis with Zaur Zurtov and two art workshops for children, one with Liz Byrne and one with Seán O Hanrahán in Caltragh community centre. We facilitated a parent and toddler group in Caltragh every Wednesday morning with Sindhu Hope. These all finished in July 2008.

4.7 Summer camps

We organised and ran summer camps for children aged 4-6 for three 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.

We held two fundraising events during the year the first on Pancake Tuesday for the National Children's Hospital, Tallaght and the second in June, with a picnic in Kevinsforth for Barnardos.

We also held Christmas parties for the adoptive parents and their children and the parent and toddler group and children from Footprints drop-in crèche.

4.9 Ethnic Minorities

Sligo FRC is involved in working with minorities through Diversity Sligo and the Globe House crèche steering group. The co-ordinator of Sligo FRC is now the chairperson of Diversity Sligo. A significant amount of funding was sourced for training for adults, afterschool activities and some childcare. This was administered by Diversity Sligo. The Globe House residential unit for asylum seekers crèche accommodated up to 30 children.

4.10 Other initiatives/services

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Access visits between parents and their children who are in foster care and/or living with the other parent frequently takes place in the Centre. This year we were in a position to accommodate three families in this service.

Home support (12 hours/week) for **young vulnerable woman** in collaboration with the HSE mental health social work department – some meetings about this project occurred at the end of 2008 and it was put into action early in 2009.

Childcare Subvention Scheme – an application was submitted to the Office of the Minister for Children and Young People (OMCYP) for funding of *Footprints* drop-in crèche under this initiative. This was a substantial piece of work.

Refugee Legal Aid – the solicitor from the Refugee Legal Aid service in Galway attends the Centre once a fortnight to provide free legal service to local refugees and asylum seekers.

Room rental – the Centre provides space for groups to meet on Monday, Tuesday evenings and Saturday afternoons.

Counselling room – two counsellors use this room to provide counselling services.

Staff Team Building Event – took place on Saturday 29 September in the Lough Key Forest Park

Local Networking – Sligo FRC is represented on the board of the Sligo County Childcare Committee, Area Implementation Team (AIT) as part of the RAPID working group, Social Inclusion Measures (SIMS) group, Interagency Group on New communities.

Regional Networking – occurs as part of the Donegal, Leitrim and Sligo FRCs' co-ordinators and administrators regional network meetings

National Networking – Sligo FRC attended the AGM of the National Forum of Family Resource Centres and FRC national forum.

Training undertaken by CE participants (2007-2008)

Training	No of Participants	Level of Achievement
Health and safety	9	Cert of attendance
Manual Handling	9	Cert of Attendance
ECDL in Word, Excel, and Access	2	ECDL
Tas Books Computerised Accounts Level One	2	Cert of Attendance
Parenting Course	12	Cert of Attendance
Safe Pass	1	Health & Safety authority
Basic Microsoft Publisher	3	Cert of Attendance
Early Childhood Education	2	FETAC level 5 module
Child Development - Childcare	1	FETAC level 5 module
Work Experience	3	FETAC level 5 module
Art & Craft	2	FETAC level 5 module
Working In Childcare	3	FETAC level 5 module
Caring for children with special needs	2	FETAC level 5 module
Caring for children 0-6	1	FETAC level 5 module
Communications	1	FETAC level 5 module
Child Protection Training	3	HSE Children First
Summer camp training	10	Cert of attendance
Home Support Training	6	Cert of attendance
Occupational & Paediatric First Aid	11	Cert from Health & Safety Authority
Occupational First Aid Refresher Course	3	Cert from Health & Safety Authority
Self Assertiveness, Self Esteem & Self Confidence	10	Cert of Attendance
Food Hygiene	10	HSE Certificate in the principles of food hygiene
Buntús Start Programme	5	Cert of attendance
Job Seeking Skills & CV Preparation	10	Cert of Attendance
Basic Computers	3	Cert of attendance
Keyboard Skills	1	Cert of Attendance
Managing Challenging Behaviour	3	Cert of attendance
The Importance of Play	10	Cert of Attendance

Numbers of staff involved in third level training

- BA Family and community studies (NUIG) (1)
- Certificate in Management (UL) (1)

Summary of Service Users (2008)⁴

Programme	Adults	Children	Total
Parent & toddler group drama (Centre)	64	91	155
Parent & toddler group free play	28	33	61
Father and children circus workshops	13	37	44
Adoptive parents support group	51	42	93
<i>Footprints users</i>	0	179	179
<i>Home support users</i>	18 families		
Art, workshops for children (Centre based)			
Art & table tennis workshops for children based in Caltragh		15	15
Summer Camp	0	37	37
Parenting courses Raising boys, Raising girls, positive parenting	30	0	30
Family fun day	55	76	131
Triple Launch	40	25	65
TOTAL	281	535	810

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

⁴ These figures do not include all the visitors to the Centre, the night groups, the training groups and others who use the Centre.