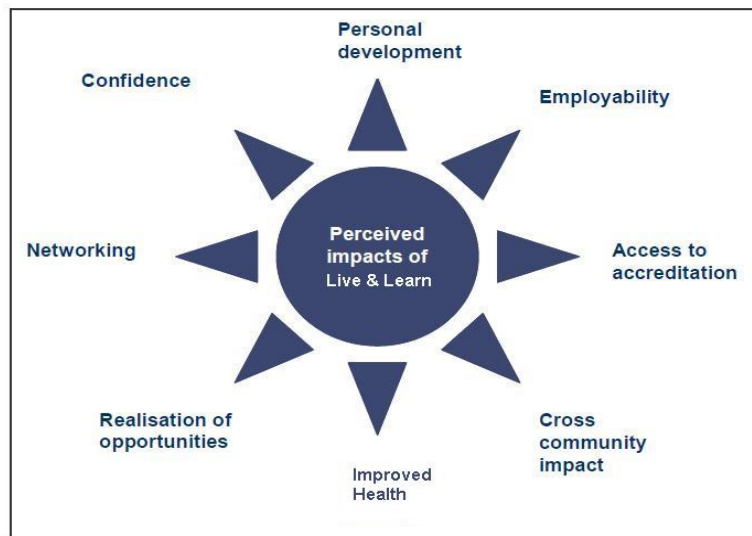


WCRP Evaluation of Year 2
1st May 2010 to 30th April 2011

‘Live and Learn’ Programme
Women’s Learning Partnership Project (WLPP)
Funded by The Big Lottery Fund

Programme Start date: May 2009
Programme End date: August 2014



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1.0 Programme Background

The Regional Women's Centres Learning Partnership Project (abbreviated to the Women's Learning Partnership Project (WLPP)) aims to deliver a broad range of both accredited and non-accredited learning opportunities, targeted specifically at 'hard to reach women'¹ at a local level across Northern Ireland, underpinned by specialist supports such as childcare provision, one to one mentoring and outreach support designed to make the idea of education and learning a more realistic option for women not currently accessing learning opportunities.

A central pillar within the WLPP is the emphasis placed on empowering women through the building of greater self-confidence and self-esteem as a foundation upon which to take more control over their own lives as women, as mothers and/or as community activists. Currently, the WLPP adds value and community capacity building measures through creating mutually supportive, collaborative learning processes for the centres delivering projects, enabling the sharing of good practice.

The WLPP aims to engage 9,490 women over the five year project period 2009-2014.

In Year 1 of the programme²:

- WLPP engaged 3842* women, exceeding their anticipated target by 202%.
- 819 women progressed to further programmes or into employment, representing 21% of participants.

In Year 2 of the programme:

- WLPP provided training places for 4538 women, 239% more than the anticipated number of 1898.
- 1450 women progressed to further programmes or into employment, representing 32% of participants.

**Year 1 Revised figure*

1.1 Project Outline

The WLPP is made up of fourteen women's organisations, namely thirteen women's centres located across Northern Ireland and the Foyle Women's Information Network. It is supported by the Women's Centres Regional Partnership (WCRP) comprising lead organisations, the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA), the Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN), the Women's Support Network (WSN) and The Women's Centre Derry.

1.2 Controlling and Planning Mechanisms³ Adopted by the WLPP Partnership Include:

1.2.1 Strategy:

The 13 women's centres and one women's network organisation engaged in the delivery of the Live and Learn project continue as:

¹ 'Hard to reach' embraces a variety of need identified by women living in disadvantaged areas, who continue to feel prevented from fulfilling their potential, as a consequence of a combination of social, economic, health, education, language and/or political barriers and who continue to be in need of support by Women's Centres.

² The Year 1 external evaluation can be accessed at:

http://www.wcrp.org.uk/cms/data/upimages/L_L_Evaluation_Nov_2010_Final_Draft_version2.pdf

³ McKinsey's 7-S Framework is used to reflect organisational success factors: Strategy, Structure, Skills, Staff, Style, Systems, Shared Values.

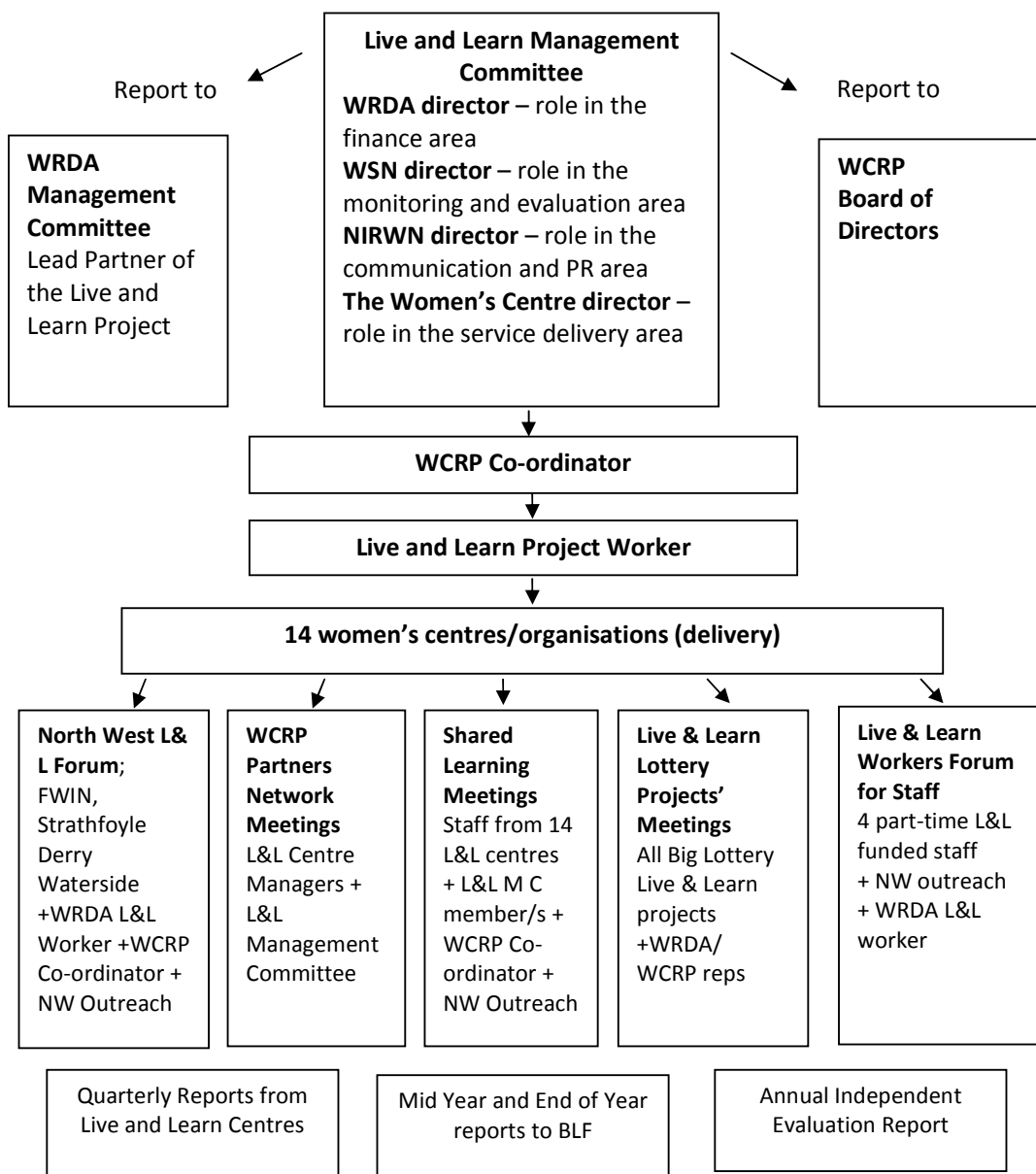
Women's Centres	Women's Network Organisation	Location	Purpose of project funding	Actual Engagement Numbers in Year 2 – New Beneficiaries	Actual Engagement Numbers in Year 2 – Total Training Places
	Foyle Women's Information Network (FWIN)	North West	Engagement agent for 3600 participants over 5 years	330	919
	Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA)	Regional	Management of WLPP project: Monitoring, Co-ordination and support to Centres.	(1 part-time staff plus management of project) 400 prospectus distribution	N/A
Atlas		Lisburn	100 participants over 5 years	183	352
Ballybeen		E. Belfast	350 participants over 5 years	(Engagement of P/T worker) 87	205
Footprints		W. Belfast	750 participants over 5 years	119	279
Greenway		E. Belfast	300 participants over 5 years	143	236
Falls		W. Belfast	180 participants over 5 years.	(Engagement of P/T worker) 103	171
Shankill		N. Belfast	480 participants over 5 years	165	630
Chrysalis		Craigavon	100 participants over 5 years	60	173
First Steps		Dungannon	500 participants over 5 years	(Engagement of P/T worker) 84	158
Magherafelt		Magherafelt	300 participants over 5 years	155	270
WC Derry		Derry	200 participants over 5 years	133	355
Waterside		Derry	200 participants over 5 years	59	153
Windsor		S. Belfast	160 participants over 5 years	69	266
Strathfoyle		Derry	200 participants over 5 years	73	371

In Year 2, 98% of the Big Lottery Fund (BLF) grant was spent on working with project beneficiaries. This represents exceptional value for money. Project beneficiaries over the five years of the project were set at 9,490 giving a unit cost per beneficiary of just £105. In Year 1 of the project, 3842 beneficiaries were engaged at a unit cost of £38.21 per participant; in Year 2 of the project, 4538 beneficiaries were engaged at a unit cost of £47.05 each. It should be noted that the unit cost is low due to centres contributing in-kind

costs associated with the project. In-kind costs may include, for example, management costs, staff costs, running costs and promotional costs.

1.2.2 Management and Reporting Structures:

WRDA continues to act as the lead organisation in the WLPP partnership with responsibility for the financial management of the project and providing operational support to the strategic team responsible for overseeing areas such as monitoring and evaluation, communications, PR and service delivery. The WCRP Co-ordinator and WCRP NW Outreach Worker support the WRDA Live and Learn Project Worker to support the work of the women’s centres, co-ordinating the forum and meeting structures which have grown organically to maximise communications, to build capacity within the groups through shared learning and networking opportunities, and to ensure coherence and consistency in relation to project management issues.



1.2.3 Skills

This structure works well to facilitate the skills sharing and development which remains a central tenet of the WLPP Live and Learn project. Added value has been achieved through meetings held strategically and operationally via the following forums:

- **North West Live & Learn Forum**

The purpose of this forum is to provide an opportunity to share information, monitor project progress and identify common areas and issues of interest. Meetings are held quarterly, hosted by Derry Women's Centre. The forum brings together the four NW partners, WRDA Live and Learn Worker, WCRP North West Outreach worker and the WCRP Coordinator.

- **Live & Learn Workers Forum for Staff**

This new forum was set up in Year 2 of the project with the first meeting on 13th Dec 2010. These meetings bring together the four part-time staff funded through the Live & Learn project (three of which are based in women's centres). The purpose of this forum is to provide support, share information, discuss project operational issues and project monitoring progress, and identify common areas and issues of interest. Quarterly meetings are facilitated by the WRDA, hosted at one of the women's centres.

- **WCRP Partners Network Meetings**

The purpose of these meetings is to enable centre managers to focus on strategic topics, engage in planning and review, allow for information sharing and the identification of common areas and issues of interest. Meetings are held quarterly and hosted by a participating women's centre on a rotating basis.

- **Live & Learn Shared Learning Meetings**

These meetings provide an opportunity to focus on a key outcome theme for specific discussion; the focus is most often at project delivery level, with an opportunity for information exchange and external speakers to attend. Meetings are held annually and attended by staff from the 14 delivery partners who have responsibility for the Live & learn project and Live & Learn Management Committee members. Meetings are chaired by WCRP and hosted by a women's centre. The Nov 2010 meeting focused on L&L Outcome 'Physical Activity' hosted by Footprints Women's Centre. Dr Margaret Cupples from the Centre for Excellence in Public Health (NI) gave a presentation on the outcomes and impact of physical activity. As part of the shared learning agenda, Windsor Women's Centre showed a DVD reflecting their Live & Learn physical activity projects which also highlighted their involvement in the Cancer Research UK Race for Life. Additionally, part of the shared learning activity involves a tour/talk from the host organisation.

- **Live & Learn Lottery Projects' Meetings**

Meetings provide an opportunity for all projects funded under the Big Lottery Live & Learn initiative to come together to network and share information on their projects. Discussion has focused on areas such as self evaluation, external evaluation, monitoring systems and project progression. WRDA/WCRP hosted the 13th April 2011 meeting and gave a presentation on the development of the WLPP Live & Learn project, which focused on the project's outcomes, targets, delivery partners and the year 1 evaluation report.

1.2.4 Staff

WLPP Live and Learn funding provides employment for:

- 1 part time Project Worker at the WRDA offices to support the delivery of the initiative, and
- 3 part-time workers: 1 x Falls Women's Centre; 1x Ballybeen Women's Centres; 1 x First Steps Women's Centre, Dungannon.

Funding has also provided tutor hours for programme delivery creating hourly employment for a number of women and men (as appropriate) regionally who are contracted through the various women's centres. Added value has been created to supplement the quality of engagement for beneficiaries, through progression routes for volunteers built into the Live and Learn programmes. Volunteering has not only widened the pool of support to participants; it has also enabled supported placement opportunities to put skills learned into practice, enhancing employment possibilities in the process. Year 3 is likely to see some

of these volunteers progressing into paid employment as tutors within the centres such as through programmes at Chrysalis Women’s Centre and, like the staff at the centres, provide wonderful role models for the most vulnerable and hardest to reach beneficiaries.

1.2.5 Style

The empowerment style of leadership within the WLPP and the participating centres - based on consultation, engagement, information sharing and participation - is increasingly reflecting its relevance through the evidencing of outcomes, the achievement of objectives, that the different Live and Learn programmes are having on the lives of beneficiaries. This evaluation evidences these impacts which are broadening as the project evolves.

1.2.6 Systems

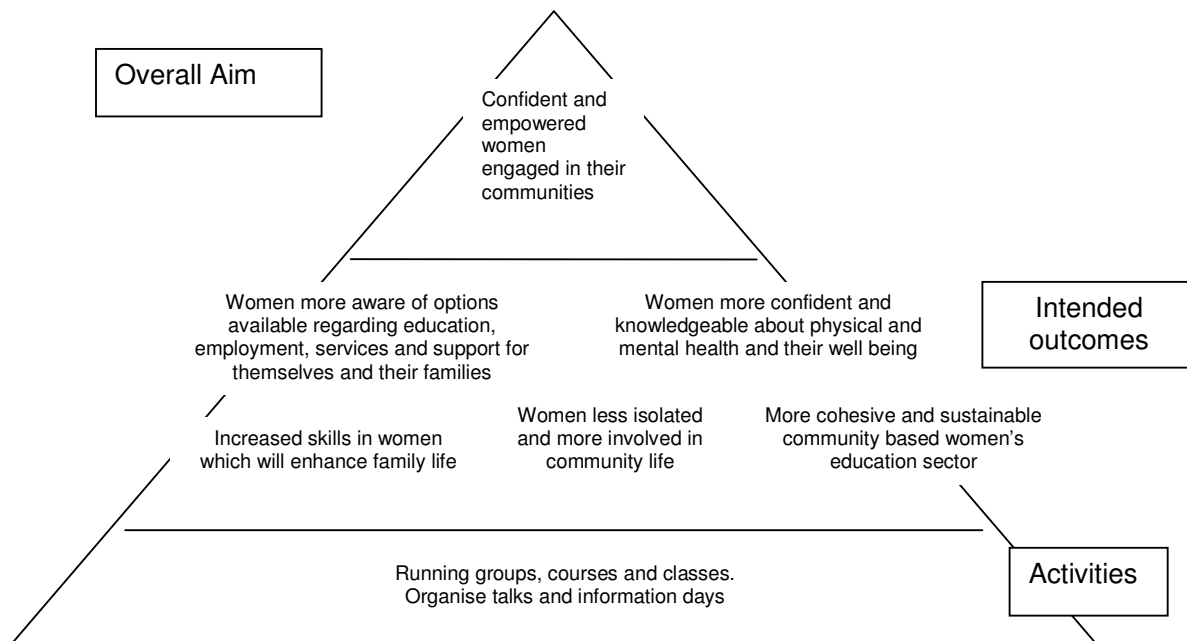
WRDA, as lead partner, has built upon their Quality and Equality Awards (including a National Training Award and ‘Investors in People’ recognition) by achieving the ‘Investors in People’ Bronze status in December 2010. It maintains robust financial and management information systems. Delivery partners were consulted during the year in revising the Live & Learn ‘distance travelled’ forms and the monitoring forms.

1.2.7 Shared Values

WLPP is a partnership of equals - all of the partners have either a critical strategic or operational role to play in making the project work. Such a shared sense of collective responsibility lies at the very core of the entire Live and Learn project. The agreed ethos of the project is that of empowering women to be able to play a more active role in embracing their own needs, aspirations and capacity and to be able to harness their knowledge and power to make a positive difference within their communities.

2.0 Programme Aims

The overall aim, intended outcomes and activities are summarised as follows:



The six outcome areas and targets for Live and Learn, over 2009-2014 are:

Outcome 1

1620 women will have increased knowledge, confidence and skills to make better informed choices relating to their physical health and that of their families and children, at the end of the five year project.

Outcome 2

1925 women will have increased personal levels of confidence and self esteem and have enhanced their employability levels at the end of the five year project, through accessing accredited and non-accredited community based programmes.

Outcome 3

950 women from ethnic minorities and migrant workers backgrounds will have increased confidence, language skills and knowledge of services leading to increased social inclusion, at the end of the five year project.

Outcome 4

More cohesion and sustainability for the community based women's education sector will be obtained through the publication of 10,000 copies of a regional training and education prospectus, over the five year project.

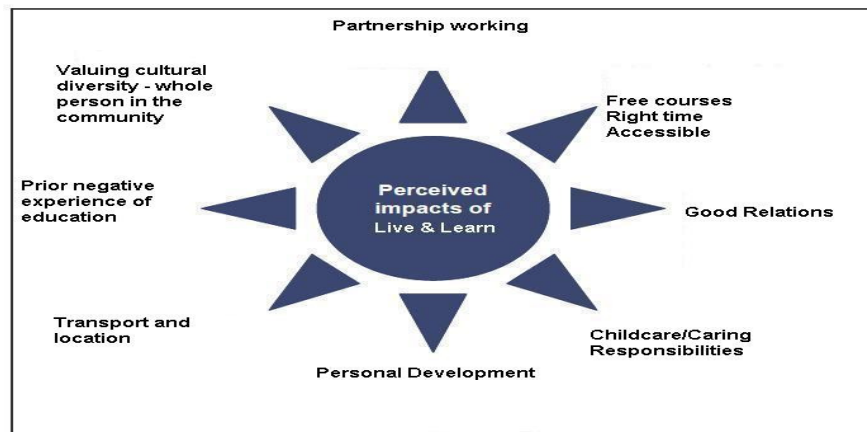
Outcome 5

945 women will have increased knowledge, skills and confidence in maths and literacy enabling them to better support their children's education and enhance family life, at the end of the five year project.

Outcome 6

2050 women will have increased knowledge, confidence and skills to address stressful situations which impact negatively on their mental health, at the end of the five year project.

Underlying principles in project delivery:



3.0 Programme Participants

The target of 9,490 women to be recruited over the lifetime of the programme has been set to engage 'hard to reach' women drawn from across Northern Ireland and drawn from disadvantaged communities; women of all ages, cultural backgrounds and ethnicity, living in disadvantaged areas throughout Northern Ireland, who cannot access educational and learning opportunities due to a lack of quality and affordable childcare, lack of support with caring responsibilities, time and cost of classes, transport and location, prior negative experience of education, lack of confidence and self-esteem who have been prevented from

fulfilling their potential in their communities as a consequence of a combination of social, economic and/or political barriers.

The primary project objective is to engage with hard to reach women learners and their families to ensure that the women who participate not only acquire the confidence, skills and learning to enable them to fulfil their social and economic potential but that their physical and mental health is significantly enhanced by instilling, through learning and education, a greater sense of self worth, value and pride.

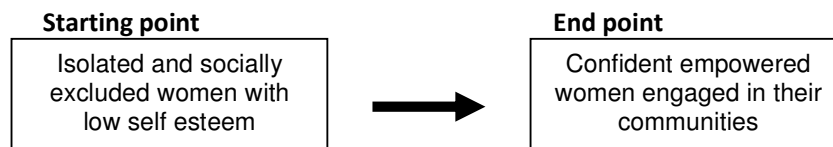
4. Programme delivery

4.1 Project Inputs

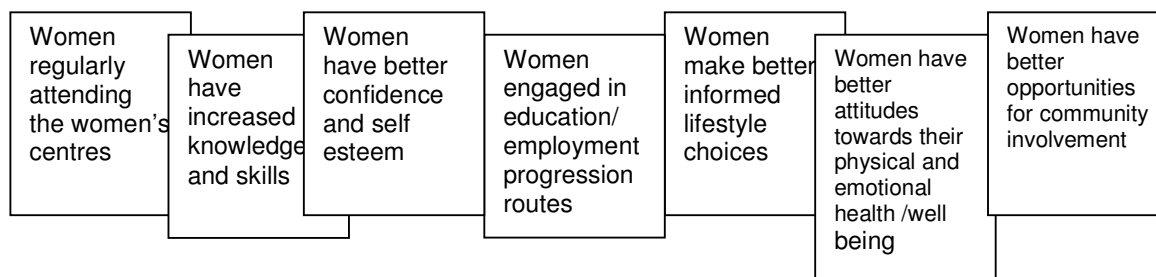
The women's community based education model has developed in a very organic way and the needs of women and communities are at the heart of this model. There is an understanding that childcare, transport and course costs are real barriers to women's inclusion in learning and these are sourced by the organisations whenever possible. Women are eased back into learning through taster sessions, introductory courses and supported with advice, guidance, counselling and a range of learning support mechanisms. The environment is informal, friendly, non-bureaucratic and encouraging. Courses are facilitated rather than taught. The reality of women's lives is accepted and catered for rather than disregarded. Women's centres also realise that there is a growing need to provide health support for those struggling with multiple inequalities and achieving a basic level of well-being is acknowledged as the first step in returning to learn.

The old truism that 'the trainer is the course' remains powerful within the women's centres. It is the quality of the engagement by every member of staff that makes the women's centres stand out as exemplars of excellence across the board. The shared values underpinning 'empowering leadership' are probably most tested within the classroom where small groupings of women are afforded a level of connectedness which enables, where appropriate, the vulnerability of participants to emerge, the safe release of individual barriers to progression and the supported environment within which individual growth and development may be nurtured. Focus groups held at every centre visited over the two years of 'Live and Learn' evidence retention and completion rates which would be the envy of any Further Education College and women unanimously record their judgement of this outcome in direct relation to the quality of the inputs, the genuine regard of the tutors, and the credibility of the tutors in bringing their relevant life experience as caring, kind and generous contributors to their lives. Beneficiaries recognise these providers as major catalysts in the change process of their lives.

Women's Learning Partnership – Learning Journey



Steps along the way



4.2 Outputs By Centres

Outcome 1: Improved physical health

1620 women will have increased knowledge, confidence and skills to make better informed choices relating to their physical health and that of their families and children, **at the end of the five year project**. (approximately 324 beneficiaries per annum)

Engagement: 810 training places in Year 2, with 373 *new* beneficiaries who participated in training and development activities provided by First Steps, Magherafelt, Footprints, Greenway, Waterside and FWIN. **The target was exceeded by 250% in terms of training places and the target was exceeded by 15% in terms of new beneficiaries.**

Table Outcome 1: Improved Physical Health

Centre	Target enrol	Actual training places	Actual new beneficiaries
Footprints	30	55	11
Greenway	30	143	83
First steps	50	94	52
Magherafelt	30	177	94
Waterside	40	153	49
FWIN	144	188	84
Totals	324	810	373

Outcome 2: Improvement in confidence and self esteem enhancing employability

1925 women will have increased personal levels of confidence and self esteem and have enhanced their employability levels **at the end of the five year project**, through accessing accredited and non-accredited community based programmes. (385 beneficiaries per annum).

Engagement: 1864 training places in year 2, with 699 *new* beneficiaries who participated in training and development activities provided by Chrysalis, Ballybeen, Shankill, Atlas, Footprints, Women's Centre Derry and FWIN. **The target for Year 2 was exceeded by 484% in terms of training places and the target was exceeded by 82% in terms of new beneficiaries.**

Table Outcome 2: Improved Confidence, Self Esteem, Employability

Centre	Target enrol	Actual training places	Actual new beneficiaries
Atlas	20	352	183
Ballybeen	35	103	50
Footprints	50	115	53
Shankill	96	630	165
Chrysalis	20	173	60
WC Derry	20	138	64
FWIN	144	353	124
Totals	385	1864	699

Outcome 3: Promoting social inclusion for ethnic minority women

950 women from ethnic minorities and migrant workers backgrounds will have increased confidence, language skills and knowledge of services leading to increased social inclusion, **at the end of the five year project.** (190 beneficiaries per annum)

Engagement: 166 training places were delivered in year 2 to promote the inclusion of ethnic minority women. **The target for training places was partially met by 87% and the target for new beneficiaries was partially met by 34%.** Beneficiary numbers for Year 2 increased by 28 more than in Year 1.

Table Outcome 3: Promoting Social Inclusion for Ethnic Minority Women

Centre	Target enrol	Actual training places	Actual new beneficiaries
Falls	20	64	27
WC Derry	10	44	8
Windsor	16	28	16
FWIN	144	30	4
*Waterside	-	-	10
Totals	190	166	65

**This figure includes 10 beneficiaries from a conversational English class arranged by Waterside to help support ethnic minority women to participate more in the Live and Learn programmes within Waterside Women's Centre (Waterside are not working to a target for this outcome).*

Outcome 4: Production of prospectus to enhance cohesion and sustainability

More cohesion and sustainability for the community based women's education sector will be obtained through the publication of 10,000 copies of a regional training and education prospectus, over the five year project.

Table Outcome 4: Production Of Prospectus

Centre	Target No	Actual	Actual Beneficiaries
WCRP	400	Production of WCRP 'Women's Community Education and Training Prospectus 2010-2011	Copies distributed to 1,400 beneficiaries

The launch of the Community Based Training & Education Prospectus for 2010-2011 was held on 10 August 2010. A total of 1,400 prospectuses were produced and subsequently distributed to potential beneficiaries of the Live and Learn project in hard paper and through a downloadable pdf. Consequently 400 beneficiaries are added to the total for Year 2 (as per WLPP Live and Learn Project Business Plan target).

Outcome 5: Enhance family life through confidence and skills development particularly literacy and maths skills for women

945 women will have increased knowledge, skills and confidence in maths and literacy enabling them to better support their children's education and enhance family life, **at the end of the five year project.** (189 beneficiaries per annum)

Engagement: 434 training places in Year 2, with 145 *new* beneficiaries who participated in training and development activities provided by Ballybeen, Women's Centre Derry and FWIN. **The target was exceeded by 230% in terms of training places and 77% of the target was met in terms of new beneficiaries.**

Table Outcome 5: Enhance Family Life

Centre	Target enrol	Actual training places	Actual new beneficiaries
Ballybeen	35	102	37
WC Derry	10	173	61
FWIN	144	159	47
Totals	189	434	145

Outcome 6: Support to improve mental health

2050 women will have increased knowledge, confidence and skills to address stressful situations which impact negatively on their mental health, **at the end of the five year project.** (Target: 410 beneficiaries per annum)

Engagement: 1264 training places were provided and 481 *new* beneficiaries who participated in training and development activities provided by First Steps, Magherafelt, Windsor, Falls, Footprints, Greenway, Strathfoyle and FWIN. **The target for Year 2 was exceeded by 308% in terms of training places and the target is exceeded by 17% in terms of new beneficiaries.**

Table Outcome 6: Support To Improve Mental Health

Centre	Target enrol	Total training places	Actual new beneficiaries
Footprints	70	109	55
Greenway	30	93	60
Falls	30	107	76
Firststeps	50	64	32
Magherafelt	30	93	61
Windsor	16	238	53
Strathfoyle	40	371	73
FWIN	144	189	71
Totals	410	1264	481

4.3 Summary of Year 2 Achievements

The table below indicates the targets for the year and the actual training places achieved including the number of new beneficiaries to the project (those not involved in Live & learn before).

Summary Table:

Outcome	Target enrol	Total Training places	Actual new beneficiaries
Outcome 1 Physical Health	324	810	373
Outcome 2 Confidence & Employability	385	1864	699
Outcome 3 Ethnic Minorities	190	166	65
Outcome 4 Prospectus	400	1400 distributed	400
Outcome 5 Family Life	189	434	145
Outcome 6 Mental Health	410	1264	481
Totals	1898	4538*	2163

**Does not include prospectus distribution*

4.4 Progression Of Beneficiaries Year 2

Centre	Progression of participants on to other programmes
Atlas	145
Ballybeen	94
Chrysalis	65
Women's Centre Derry	120
Falls Women's Centre	97
First Steps Women's Centre	43
Footprints Women's Centre	160
FWIN	Not applicable
Greenways Women's Centre	No figures available
Magherafelt	6
Shankill Women's Centre	360
Strathfoyle Women's Centre	193
Waterside Women's Centre	94
Windsor Women's Centre	73
Total numbers progressed	1450
No progressed as % of no engaged	31%

Programme lengths ranged from 6, 10, 12 or 15 week courses and some of the delivery centres offered these programmes more than once in the year.

5.0 Training Experience

Participants' experience whilst on the Live and Learn programmes have been captured through evaluations completed at the end of each training programme or engagement opportunity. These are then collated by

each participating partner and recorded within the quarterly monitoring forms sent by each centre to the Live and Learn Project Worker at WRDA.

Interviews conducted with centre managers, Live and Learn staff and the delivery partners through the evaluation process have evidenced these high standards and the evaluator has examined both the monitoring forms and the training evaluations as an integral part of the programme analysis.

Supplementing this research, the evaluator has undertaken face to face interviews with individual women and with groups of women who participated in focus groups. Interviews conducted at Foyle Women’s Information Network (FWIN), The Learning Lodge Magherafelt, The Women’s Centre Derry, Strathfoyle Women’s Activity Group, Shankill Women’s Centre, Chrysalis Women’s Centre and Falls Women’s Centres have been included in this report. All the centres provided excellent examples of good practice and all centres interviewed in Year 2 have received a full copy of their evaluation report for information.

Beneficiaries providing feedback on the Live and Learn outcomes were guided through questionnaires² appropriate to their target area. Questionnaires were then completed on an individual basis and additional comments were written up by the evaluator. One-to-one interviews were then held with those keen to provide additional information and case studies. Permission was granted to provide the first names of those individuals interviewed and whose case studies are included.

5.1 Focus Groups

The evaluator carried out the following focus groups during the year:

Focus Groups 2011			
Target/Themed area	Organisation visited	Date of visit	Number in focus group
Project Outcome 1: 1620 women will have increased knowledge, confidence and skills to make better informed choices relating to their physical health and that of their families and children	Magherafelt FWIN	4 th April 5 th April	9 Interview with Director
Project Outcome 2: 1925 women will have increased personal levels of confidence and self esteem and have enhanced their employability levels at the end of the five year project, through accessing accredited and non-accredited community based programmes.	Shankill	13 th April	16
	Chrysalis	16 th June	11
Project Outcome 3: 950 women from ethnic minorities and migrant workers backgrounds will have increased confidence, language skills and knowledge of services leading to increased social inclusion, at the end of the five year project.	Falls	18 th April	5
Project Outcome 5: 945 women will have increased knowledge, skills and confidence in maths and literacy enabling them to better support their children’s education and enhance family life , at the end of the five year project.	WC Derry	5 th April.	10
Project Outcome 6 2050 women will have increased knowledge, confidence and skills to address stressful situations which impact negatively on their mental health , at the end of the five year project.	Strathfoyle	6 th April	18

² Questionnaires used in this evaluation can be viewed by contacting WCRP at info@wcrp.org.uk

5.1.1 Outcome 1 Focus Group(s)

Outcome 1: To assist women to make better informed choices relating to their physical health and that of their families. (Providers: FWIN, First Steps, Footprints, Greenway, Learning Lodge Magherafelt, Waterside). Focus group held with The Learning Lodge, Magherafelt.

A Focus Group was held with 9 women from **The Learning Lodge, Magherafelt** who participate in a range of health and wellbeing programmes. At the date of evaluation, these women were participating in the Health and Beauty Programme which is provided over 10 weeks, 2 hours per session weekly. The group normally has 80-100% attendance. Responses from Josephine, Mary, Maeve, Patricia, Mary Jo, Margaret, Nuala, Georgina, and Iris are outlined below:

For the women attending these sessions, a non-threatening programme such as ‘Health and Beauty’ provides an essential first step into engagement within the community:

“The Health and Beauty programme has been so therapeutic for me. I have a much better understanding of health and well-being and my own has improved immensely. The companionship is a life saver and I now am much keener to join in groups than I was before - where really I was stuck at home on my own and I felt like I was dying. Truly. I really had lost the will to live and I was up and down to the doctor. I just felt so low. You really do have to have a reason to get up and put on your lipstick and go out the door. It’s very easy to do nothing but really it’s about having the confidence to go out and feel ok in a group with people you don’t know. And then when you are low like that it’s a big step to walk in the door. But you get to know everyone quickly and then the whole week is focused on getting to see them again. My confidence and my self esteem are now a thousand times better than what it was. To have somebody say ‘You look lovely’ when you have had your face done is such a boost when you are isolated and lonely. It then makes you want to fix your hair and put on something nice and then when you keep doing that your whole sense of yourself changes. I know people think anything to do with ‘beauty’ isn’t something to be taken seriously but believe me – it’s such a powerful start when you have been stuck in the house with only the television for company and the same old shops and the same old faces!”

A number of women engage for the sheer joy of having a bit of company and to break the isolation of living alone in a rural/semi-rural area which provides little to cater to their needs:

“There are six of us who now come together in one car and we make a day of it, starting with our class and then we go for lunch. It’s very therapeutic for all of us and because you know you are going in the group it makes you make an effort – not just for that one day but for the other days too because we all keep each other going and encourage each other to go walking and watch what we eat and look after our health more than we would if we were on our own. Four out of the six are on their own so the group is a real life saver in every way. It’s the only thing for us older women in the area and we would just be lost without it – that’s the truth! I know some people wouldn’t take a class like ‘Health and Beauty’ seriously, but for us it’s the difference between keeping yourself going and giving up on yourself. So it’s as important to us at this stage of our lives as going to University is for a young one.”

The direct health benefits arising out of a non-accredited, introductory programme are not underestimated by the participants who also come with health issues to resolve:

“Coming to the Learning Lodge is really the only place where I can get ‘me’ time and an opportunity to meet up with other women and have a bit of fun. I travel 10 miles to get here and take two buses as there is nothing where I live and I live alone so it gets very lonely. It is the highlight of my week and I wouldn’t miss it for the world. And it isn’t just about ‘beauty tips’. I have a health condition and the medication I am on affected my skin and coming here has helped me understand how tablets have an impact on your

body. My skin has now cleared up and I have moved on to alternative medicine instead and that wouldn't have happened if I hadn't taken this course and the Yoga course at the Centre."

"I struggle with mental health problems and I find it hard to get out of bed in the mornings. I came here for the counselling and then was invited to join this group. Having the yoga and this class to come to gives me a life-line. I travel 35 miles round trip just to come here and wouldn't miss it. Having the crèche on site is a huge benefit and I am deeply grateful for that."

"I live on my own and it's quite a distance out of the town. Coming here is so important to me that I even change my hospital appointments to make sure I don't miss these classes. I meet people here and we share our lives and that's a big thing when you live alone. It gives me something to wash my face for and look after myself. And it's fun which is also important when you are isolated. There is no way I would do something that I had to do an exam or write an essay or that. That's not what I need in my life. I'll never go back to work again but I would help out in the community so long as it wasn't too tiring and it was a bit of fun."

Learning Lodge response to questionnaire completed by 9 women present at focus group on 4th April:

About you and your health (summary highlights):

Health impacts criteria	Overall health improvement	
	Some impact %	Major impact %
My health/well-being has improved	33	66
Better understanding of how to improve my health	23	77
Have made healthy changes to the way I live	23	77
I have a better understanding of how to deal with stress		100
More confidence to talk about health needs	22	88
General increase in self confidence/esteem		100

100% of the participants rated the support received from the centre as either 'Excellent' or 'above average'.

5.1.2 Outcome 2 Focus Group(s)

Outcome 2: To assist women in increasing their personal levels of confidence and self-esteem, enhancing their future employability levels. (Providers: Atlas, Ballybeen, Chrysalis, FWIN, Footprints, Shankill, Women's Centre Derry). Focus Groups held with Chrysalis Women's Centre and Shankill Women's Centre.

A Focus Group was held at **Chrysalis Women's Centre** on 16th June 2011.

Present at focus group: Danielle, Agnieszka, Hannah, Anna, Geraldine, Selina, Leanne, Anna, Margo, Nicola, Trisha.

Live and Learn Programmes on which women have participated over the last year include:

- Employability Skills Programme, OCN Level 2
- Digital Media
- Equality and Diversity, OCN Level 2
- Stress Management
- First Aid
- Medical Word Processing, OCR Level 2
- Reminiscence
- Food Safety

-
- English and Maths
 - Word Processing, Level 2
 - Certificate in IT User Skills, Level 1
 - Beginners IT
 - Clait Plus
 - Learn IT
 - ECDL Extra

Learning support

Learners were forthright in highlighting the high value placed on mutual support and understanding received in their struggle to learn something new and challenging. A number of the women with previous experience at the local FE College noted the higher qualitative content and delivery of the tutors at the centre. The bulk of the women in the focus group have encountered very bad experience at school resulting in a fear of learning, very low confidence in their own abilities to acquire new knowledge, bullying, and a general anxiety over participating in a 'class'. Small class sizes in a women only environment where additional help is provided by encouraging volunteers was reported as a real bonus for all with such poor prior experiences.

"It is easier to come here to learn because the classes are smaller. A lot of time is spent by the tutors in making sure everyone understands and is able to move on to the next step. Because of the volunteer helpers who come in to assist on programmes, it is possible to have 1-1 time when needed. This is really important when something is new and hard to grasp, especially if English is not the first language. Everyone is willing to pitch in and help and there is a great sense of trust that you will be 'looked out for'. This is really unique. I have been at the local college and there is none of that. If you get behind or you don't understand, or miss a class, well the view is that is your own problem and you have to sort it out yourself. There is very little effort made to get to know you or understand if you are struggling. People just get up and leave at the end of the class and I know I felt very lonely and lost at the college."

Creating a culture of caring

Users reported that the very strong culture of caring which has evolved and been nurtured over a very long period of time is important to them. This culture, the group felt, is the central core of strength within the Centre which has permeated downward and outward to build confidence and self-esteem on an individual level. This central core has worked like a magnet, drawing the women back to the centre to continue their progression.

"We are expected to learn and to succeed and do well and move on in our lives – so we do. When our tutors and the staff give so much, we can't let them down - because they believe in us and they do all kinds of things that they think we don't see. But we know. I know that Mary – the IT tutor – asked me to help her in the classroom but it was for me and not her. I had no confidence to assist and she encouraged me and kept telling me how good I would be and how much she needed me. But it's me needed her and the opportunity to do something that would give me back my self esteem. And I got that. I am now running my own class for beginners."

"Everything is done to help you achieve. If you can't make the class on the specific day, you can join in with another class and it's no problem. There are no cliques here and the tutor and the group make space for you to join in, knowing you need to catch up or do additional work."

When asked how the group would rate the 'value' of a culture of kindness within the centre the group unanimously agreed that on a scale of 0-10, 'the culture of kindness and support for encouraging learning' is valued and promoted at the level of 10.

“There is a really genuine sense that the staff are always pleased to see us. It’s because everyone is genuine here that you feel the trust. If there’s anything they can’t help you with, they will point you in the right direction and you know without any doubt it’s genuine – not to get rid of you or fob you off but because that’s the right direction or advice.”

Inclusion of ethnic minority women

“My first language is Polish and I came here to improve my English so I could get work. I have an Engineering Degree but I am working as a cleaner as is my sister who has an Education Degree. Everyone here helps us with our English, all the time. Everyone is very helpful and patient and now I can communicate with everyone. None of us had English but now we are very good! This is so important for my family and my children and now I can help them with their school work. All of the Polish women here feel very welcome and supported and our confidence has really improved. We have friends now whereas before we were very lonely and isolated and we wanted desperately to go home but now we feel that this is our home and we are very happy. We now have set up a Polish group and want to help all our people – especially the women. I too was very encouraged by everyone at the centre and now I am the Treasurer of our Polish group.”

Confidence building and empowerment

The confidence developed by the participants has cascaded back into their family settings and out into the community where a number of women are more active in contributing within the community than they would have been if left isolated in the home. Since confidence building has been a really important feature in the lives of the women, they were asked to measure their own progress over the last two years, on a scale of 0-10 with 0 being no confidence and 10 being totally confident. The following scores were reported:

Q: Since coming to the centre for the first time, how has your confidence improved?

Confidence level on day one of arrival at the centre	Now
2 x 0 (no confidence – terrified coming in the door)	7
2 x 1	6/7
4 x 3	2 x 7/8; 2x 9
2 x 5	7/8
1 x 8	9/10 (now Management Committee Member)

One of the most empowering tools used at the centre is the encouragement of **volunteering**. Women, who themselves lacked confidence when they first started have ‘been there’, understand and can show empathy, work with others, cascading the encouragement, respect and regard that they received and which helped build their confidence. Such volunteers are powerful role models for ‘hard to reach’ users. As Margo asserted, *“When you start doing one class, you get the confidence to go on and do another and then before you know where you are you are helping somebody else.”*

“When I first came here, I was very down. I did the stress management course and was able to start to understand what was happening and why. Coming here, I am now more confident and got the boost I badly needed. Without the centre, I wouldn’t be the same person that I am now. Having the crèche on site allowed me to do courses. I was very anxious about leaving my child but knowing he was just downstairs and I could be called down if needed made all the difference to me starting to be independent myself. Mentally and physically I have improved. I started off doing very basic courses in IT/English/Maths as I left school without qualifications and now that my children are young, I can build my skills and qualifications. I have now progressed and am doing medical word processing - fantastic skills for when I am able to go back to work this September. Over the last two years, I have completed Word Processing at Level 1, 2, 3 and now medical Word Processing which is also Level 2 as well as Clait Plus. Before I had my children I was a shop assistant. Now I am taking courses in accounts/SAGE and getting myself ready to become a medical

secretary which is the job of my dreams and which there is a need for – especially with the hospital down the road. My sister and I saw the Careers Advisor from Lurgan Job Centre. She came here to Chrysalis and she was really brilliant. I did a personality test to see the kind of work that would best suit me and she helped us produce a CV and think about interviews as I wouldn't have had a clue what to do at an interview and wouldn't have had the confidence to put myself forward - but I'm trying now. We then did the Employability Course at the Centre where we did mock interviews and that was amazing. Joanne – our teacher – gave us great support and now I feel I can ask anybody here to help me. At least I am more prepared and not so scared of the whole process. My future is so exciting and I am so grateful to the centre for everything they have given me.”

Enhancing employability

The impacts of confidence building, skills development, improvement in self esteem and the contribution of volunteering as a first step to employment are clearly illustrated in the following examples of good practice within the centre:

Anna's Story

“I'm still surprised at myself when I speak out in a group! Sometimes I look at myself from a distance and can't believe myself and that wee voice is always there reminding me to not get ahead of myself or it says things like 'who do you think you are?' It's hard to get away from that when you have had years of having that drummed into you.”

“Even though I am 46 now, I still worry about what other people might say about me. I think those early years of being bullied right through school, being put down by teachers, having parents that really struggled to cope themselves that they couldn't be 'there' for us as children....its hard to get away from it. It gets ingrained in your head and you have to consciously tell it to go away.”

“I am now a community tutor at the centre and I teach two classes – crocheting/knitting and beginners IT – an enormous achievement for me.”

“My working life started through a YTP scheme when I got a job stitching at the factory. The bullying in there was terrible and I just used to keep my head down and get on with the work. I suppose I must have been a hard worker and a good worker so I was made a supervisor but I had to give that up because of the bullying and the same old messages about 'who do you think you are?' And of course I had neither the confidence nor the skills to be able to stand up for myself and when I met my husband 23 years ago we just moved away and came here. I suppose for the first 7 years I just played house with my husband while we tried to create our own wee family which was the most important thing in the world for me. Which is then how I ended up coming to the centre 16 years ago and I will always remember those first days at the centre.”

“My face reddens when I remember how desperately shy I was but the truth was I was just in bits having lost a child and I was devastated for a very long time. I lost two actually. It was such a hard time. I couldn't begin to describe it. And then my life started when I came here. And there was great kindness for me here and I suppose for a long time I just did the same thing. Quietly came and went and got on with it and kept my head down and died of embarrassment if anybody noticed me or spoke directly to me or asked me a question in class. I used to just die and couldn't answer a question in the group.”

“But slowly, slowly, I started to prove to myself that I could do things. I got great encouragement from everyone here and Theresa doesn't take 'no' for an answer! She'd ask you 'What do you need' and then provide it and then you had to do it!”

“I did the beginners computer classes and then I did more and more and I got more and more competent and confident and then Linda deliberately started to move me forward and asked me if I would assist her in

the beginners IT class which I did and I loved it and I found I could be of use so I really enjoyed it. Then the knitting and crochet class was going to fold because the tutor could no longer take it and so I took it on as a volunteer and that went really well. I was always able to knit and crochet so I loved that - every Tuesday night and have never missed a class. I still run the class as a volunteer. And then I was asked to take on the beginners IT class myself and I found I could do that too. These last two years have been just amazing. So much has happened. Before I knew it I was doing the Community Tutor's training programme at the centre, which I have now finished and I am going to the College in September to do the JEB teacher's training programme. It still amazes me that I can speak out now without feeling silly and I can see myself slapping down the voice in my head that wants to hold me back."

"My school experience was so bad that the last place on earth I would have gone before now is the Tec. But now I know I can do it."

"I can see I am a role model now. People say to me, 'I can't believe how much you have come out of yourself'. And it's true. I can't believe it myself but its true and I am just delighted. It wouldn't have happened if it hadn't been for the centre."

Agnieszka's Story:

"I moved to Northern Ireland from Poland around 2008. Although I have a degree from Poland my qualifications aren't recognised in NI and because my English language was weak, I found it difficult to gain employment. After volunteering at Chrysalis, I helped set up a Polish support group for women and children. In 2009 Chrysalis Women's Centre launched the Live & Learn project and staff at the centre discussed with me the kind of courses and support that might help me. I was keen to gain qualifications and was able to gain accreditation in Essential Skills Literacy Entry Level 3 (City & Guilds) and a Certificate in Community Tutor Training, Level 3 (Open College Network). I had no income so the Lottery funded Live & Learn courses enabled me to participate."

"Chrysalis is very welcoming to the Polish community and our Polish group meet here once a week to give each other support, encouragement, and to share information. When a job came up in the local area for a Bi-lingual Family Support Worker (maternity cover) at Splash Sure Start, Chrysalis staff supported me through providing some basic job application writing skills and when I got a job interview, Chrysalis set up a mock interview for me to give me experience in this area. I was delighted when I got the job in August 2010! My work as Bi-lingual Family Support Worker involves providing Polish families with information on crèche, parenting education and family support such as how to access key services in Northern Ireland."

"The women's centre has been very important to me and it is very important to other women and families from the Polish community. I have been able to give back to the community as I have facilitated conversational English classes at the centre and I am active in volunteering. If it hadn't been for the qualifications I gained and the support from Chrysalis Women's Centre and the Live & Learn project, I probably would still be looking for a job and struggling. I am now in a position to help others and I am in the process of applying for a permanent job with Sure Start."

Improvements in health

All of the women reported that as their confidence and skills grew, so too did their sense of wellbeing generally and improvements in mental health led them to take on more physical activities. The women were asked to compare how they feel now, physically and mentally to how they felt when they first came to the centre. Nine of the women said they would have scored themselves around 3 physically when they first came to the centre and now would score themselves at 9; the same number said they would have scored themselves at 1 emotionally/mentally when they came to the centre and would now score themselves at 9.

"I was in an awful place with my nerves when I came here. Definitely a complete wreck and could have cried all day. Coming here keeps me going, keeps me alive. I wouldn't know where I would be without the centre. Working in the garden and seeing everything grow and knowing I have helped that happen has been a huge boost for me. I feel like the garden and I have grown together and I take great pride in it, nurturing it and tending to it. We have grown together. I even come in at the weekend because of the garden, to make sure it's ok."

Geraldine's Story

"I came here with my friend who wanted to help me get my confidence back. After my mother died, I developed alopecia and my self esteem was very low. I badly needed to get out of the house and I wanted to be able to give more to my two sons but I didn't know where to begin. I grew up in a house where there was no fun and you had to keep quiet and not annoy anybody and I suppose I felt invisible. Because of that and other things, it is really important to me is that every woman should find her own voice. I suppose I lived for years feeling a lack of respect and not being allowed to speak. I couldn't create conversation with anyone and I was mentally and emotionally silenced and withdrawn. Coming to the centre brought me out of myself and helped me find my voice, helped me speak up and be heard."

"I suppose it took a couple of years for me to build my self esteem. Aurelia's cooking class was really important for that. After years of being told that you are useless, to then have people tell you that there's something you do really well and to have people appreciate you for that is a really big thing. When you feel appreciated, you feel better about yourself. You start to smile and then all of a sudden you hear yourself laughing and it's a strange sound when you aren't used to it. "

"It's so important to me to hear children laughing. It's so important that children feel they are being treated with respect and listened to and encouraged to say 'No' or 'I don't agree' and for that to be heard and taken seriously. That didn't happen for me and I have always made sure that this happens for my sons and that if they are not happy about something that they can say so. I feel really proud my sons can say 'No' and be heard and that it's ok and safe for them to be assertive about what they need."

"So two things helped me find my voice. One was the appreciation for what I cooked and the other was the Friday Club. Growing up, it was safer to stay out of our parents' way. There was a lot of chaos and violence and we really didn't have a childhood. At school and at work I was bullied so I suppose I have never found a safe place for myself. Until I came here. The Friday Club is like the childhood I never knew. We can be boisterous and play around and have fun and be loud and laugh without anybody's permission. That is a huge liberation for me. Just being with other people who can see the funny side of a thing, where you can laugh something off – instead of being terrified of the consequences of making noise – is a great tonic. It doesn't mean that something isn't real or a problem but you can lighten it and learn to laugh as I have done and it makes life a lot easier."

"I have finally found the road I want to go down. I love cooking at the centre and have done Basic Food Hygiene at Level 2. I love that people appreciate what I cook for them and I love to know that I am nurturing them through my food. The heart of the home is the kitchen and the kitchen space in the centre is the heart of the centre and I really want to be in the centre of that heart! I would love to teach a class myself at the Centre – maybe even teach young ones simple things like how to make a bowl of stew for their family. I have accepted a place on the University Access Course at Southern Regional College. Chrysalis helped with that and will continue to support me through this as I know it will be tough enough. I want to get as many qualifications as I can behind me now so that I will have options for work. I have just applied to the local Education Board for a job as a kitchen assistant but I would still continue to come here to cook and to go to classes and better myself. I have been invited to facilitate an evening cookery course at the centre next year. You have no idea what an honour this is for me."

Progression of women over the last year

Through participating in a range of Live and Learn programmes, a number of women have moved on to access courses or university or have improved their promotion prospects in their current job or moved from part time employment into full time employment:

- Agnieszka A - Sure Start Family Support Worker
- Agnieszka B - Springwell Ethnic Support Worker
- Joanna - Recruitment/Human Resources Ethnic Worker
- Roisin - TADA Community Development Worker
- Jodie - Entrance to Teacher Training Stranmillis College
- Geraldine - Entrance to Access Course (SRC)
- Jane - Diploma in Teaching and Management of Literacy and Essential Skills. Continuing into Certificate in Teaching and Management in Adult Numeracy
- Tina - Improved job promotion prospects
- Catherine - Administration in Craigavon and Banbridge Volunteer Bureau

Chrysalis Women's Centre response to questionnaire completed by 9 women at focus group on 4th April:

Skills development impacts criteria	Overall skills improvement	
	Some impact %	Major impact %
Overall my skills have improved		100
Understanding how to improve my skills to get a job		100
More knowledge of interview process	10	90
More confidence in applying for/competing for a job		100
I am now ready to enter the world of work	19	81
Willing to volunteer to get experience		100
General increase in self confidence/esteem		100
General health improved		100

100% of the participants rated the support they received from the centre as either 'Excellent' or 'Above Average'.

A Focus Group was held at **Shankill Women's Centre** on 13 April 2011. On the day of the evaluation visit 16 participants were available from the **Crochet for Beginners** class which takes place one morning a week x 2 hours x 30 weeks. 30 women are enrolled with an average of 16-20 attending per session.

Shankill Women's Centre's work in recruiting 'hard to reach' within the Greater Shankill area has included outreach to engage people initially within the Health and Wellbeing Programme which offers a range of non-threatening, non-accredited, fun and 'social' activities to help the most isolated to get back into learning/progression/employability/community involvement. The health and wellbeing programme includes two hour classes held on a weekly basis including:

- Sewing Class;
- Introduction to Painting and Drawing;
- Crochet for Beginners;
- Crochet,
- Hand-Painted Ceramics;
- Life Coaching;
- Basic Food and Hygiene.

Progression routes for Live and Learn participants onto the Education, Training and Employability Project include higher level programmes such as SAGE Accounts; pre-GCSE Maths; basic computer; driving theory; Clait and a wide range of other programmes, funded from a cocktail of resources, of benefit to those seeking to enhance employment opportunities.

The 'social' side of **Crochet for Beginners** class, creating community linkage and improved quality of life, was emphasised by many on the programme some of whom saw their progression, at this stage of their engagement, more within volunteering and community fundraising than employment.

Hazel

"If I didn't have the centre to come to I'd be stuck in the house looking at four walls and going mad. I come here from Newtownabbey where I moved to with the redevelopment but I still think of the Shankill as my home and my community. This is where my friends of a lifetime are. I come here on the bus and then take a taxi with my zimmer frame. There's nothing in my area. I come here for the company and the class. This centre's the best. For learning, for the welcome you get, for organising the classes with teachers that are like ourselves – no airs and graces about them and posh clothes and accents. Just nice and down to earth that you can learn from. You couldn't get better. Although I am retired I don't mind the trek here. Even at my age, coming here gives me confidence. It's even more important when you have aches and pains 24/7 to push yourself to get out. I am on my own all day and if I didn't come here I would have nothing to think about but pills, pills and pills. It's great too when we get wee treats like the open days or the International Women's Day events. You can get your hands done then, and get homeopathy and join in the cookery class and have a bit of fun. I started to change my diet and buy healthier food now and that definitely has helped me with my arthritis."

Oonagh

"I come up from Bangor with my mother who is from the Shankill. If we didn't come here, we would just sit in and watch TV but we can come here and do the crocheting together and learn something new and she is happy to be back in her own community again. It's so important to have a class to come to for a focus. When she sees her friends or old neighbours, it's much easier to say 'I come over for the wee class down the road' than 'I am so lonely away from everything and everybody I knew.'"

Lou

"This class is really good for your nerves. Concentrating on this and not dropping a stitch keeps you occupied so you aren't concentrating on all the anxieties. I can't help it. The anxiety just comes and it won't go away for love or money. I've tried everything. But coming here definitely helps me and the other women. Especially the widow women who are on their own like me. There's company and stories to get caught up with and patterns to keep in mind and your hands are busy and it's just the best therapy I know. You can forget your troubles for a couple of hours and it's good to make things for the church fair or for Alzheimer's or poor children."

Lily

"Its great getting out and about and mixing with people and learning something new and it really is such a boost to your confidence to see somebody wearing what you have made and loving it. These things will stay in the family forever. You just know that. This wee shawl is for my granddaughter and I know when I am dead and gone my daughter will treasure this for it was made by the child's granny. It's like treasures you pass down. I know that in every stitch and it's a great feeling. Warms your heart. If I wasn't coming here and doing this I would be sitting at home ill or on tablets."

Staff member

"People are very nervous when they come in the door and don't know what to expect. Week by week they tell you different things about themselves and their lives because they build a relationship and then they can start after a while to look for other help. The range of provision at Shankill Women's Centre opens up a different world. There are a lot of women who don't know what is available for them and are isolated and lonely. It's only now when things are more normal that women are only starting to deal with the trauma of the past. Its only services such as we have here that keep the women out of the mental health system. There is hardly anyone who comes here who isn't currently or hasn't recently been under a lot of stress and

trauma. Women of all ages. The classes are just the hook to get them in the door and give them a legitimate reason to attend. It's not that they are desperate to learn crochet. They are desperate to be part of a group, a community, have a reason to get out of bed in the morning, a reason to put on their make up or comb their hair so they aren't hanging round the house all day in their pyjamas! Look around you, here. Look at the women in their pyjamas taking kids to school. And the thing is, these women can't and won't pay £75 for a 15 week crochet class as is being asked of them at Belfast Met. Classes are paid for by the BLF fund. Without this funding, the women would be paying £150 at the local College for the year plus the wool and needles. Our users couldn't afford that."

All of the women who attended the focus group felt that their health and well being and their confidence had improved significantly due to involvement in Live and Learn programmes at the centre. All of the women are keen to progress their skills and move to the higher level crochet class. The majority of the women have provided handmade items for fundraising at local community projects. The centre is keen to promote a future social economy project selling handmade items, produced via a range of programmes, at seasonal fairs and markets.

5.1.3 Outcome 3 Focus Group(s)

Outcome 3: To increase confidence, language skills and knowledge of services leading to increased social inclusion of ethnic minorities and migrant workers. (Providers: Falls, FWIN, Windsor, Women's Centre Derry). Focus Group held with Falls Women's Centre.

A Focus Group was held with 9 women from The **Falls Women's Centre** who were participating in the Cookery Course: Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering, awarded by the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH). 9 week programme between Jan 2011 and April 2011. 10 participants sat the exam. Participants in the focus group were Joyce, Liz, Ellen, Kathy, and Lindita.

Programmes offered by Falls Women's Centre aiming to promote the social inclusion of ethnic minority women include:

- Lipstick & Money
- Cookery and Food Hygiene
- Introduction to Computers
- Driving Theory
- Jewellery Making
- Arts & Crafts

Programmes such as those at Fall's Women's Centre are valuable in assisting the integration of beneficiaries into the community through meeting and encouraging the development of friendships. Nancy, the Live and Learn Worker at Falls notes, *"Many of our courses bring together women from ethnic minority backgrounds with local women. This is important as it helps create a sense of 'community' and the women are a great support for each other. We have quite a demand for courses to improve literacy from women who left school at an early age and from asylum seekers we work with. A number of the women have had a life marked with trauma, loss, abuse, sadness and lack of opportunity so they are empathetic and relate very well with the asylum seekers and refugees/economic migrants."*

Joyce's Story

"I am an asylum seeker from Malawi and was doing some training with another group in South Belfast when Nancy came and explained about Falls Women's Centre and what they had to offer so I came here and I met the other women and did some computer training and then the cookery class and I just keep coming here now. It's like my new home and I feel very safe here. Now I can keep in contact with my family in Malawi since I learned how to use the computer."

I have two young children at school in Belfast and am on my own with them so that when they are at school it is very boring and lonely in the house. I really wanted to know how to cook Belfast food and learn more about how people speak in Belfast as I was very confused about things people would say but now I understand better. Now I have done maths and arts and crafts and am doing the restoration class to fix clothes and old furniture. I couldn't do without the centre now and the new friends I have made."

Lindita's Story

"I am an asylum seeker from Albania and came to Belfast two years ago. Until 6 months ago I went nowhere and still have never been outside of Belfast. I used to walk past the centre every day and watched other women with children go in and out and one day I plucked up the courage to come in myself. I was so lonely then. I knew no-one and there is no Albanian community in Belfast. My children were being called names in the street and at school and boys threw eggs at my door. It was terrible for us and we cried a lot at the racism we experienced. Once I got to know my neighbours it started to be easier as they were very kind to us and helpful.

Since coming to the centre I now have friends for the first time and I don't cry as much as I did. Nancy helped me get a 'boost' card from Belfast City Council so I can now take my children to the swimming pool. I am working hard on my English and coming to the centre is a great help but I am very keen to go to classes as I cannot afford to go to the courses at the colleges – they are too expensive. Since coming to the Falls Women's Centre I have been able to do word processing and cookery classes and I am keen to do more."

Fall's Women's Centre participants' response to questionnaire:

Inclusion of ethnic minorities impacts criteria	Overall skills improvement	
	Some impact %	Major impact %
Overall my skills have improved		100
This course/activities will help me gain the skills and confidence useful for employment		100
General increase in self confidence/esteem		100
General health improved		100
More interested to find out more about life in NI		100
I have a better understanding of what's available in the community – services, activities etc.		100
I now feel more a part of life in NI		100

5.1.4 Outcome 5 Focus Group(s)

Outcome 5: To increase knowledge, skills and confidence in maths and literacy enabling beneficiaries to better support their children's education and enhance family life. (Providers: Ballybeen, FWIN, Women's Centre Derry). Focus group held with Derry Women's Centre.

A Focus Group was held at **Derry Women's Centre** on 5th April with maths and literacy programme ethnic minority participants at the centre. The 12 women registered on the programme originate from China (2), Spain, France (2), Egypt, Italy, India, Algeria, and Indonesia. Present at the focus group: Monmita, Dina, Feijunwang, Aissata, Pilar, Isabelle, Arantxa, Lilian, Maya, Xian participate on the English Language Conversation Course (a non accredited programme which runs weekly throughout the academic year). Three of the group also participate in a Yoga class and three others participate in the Multicultural Group held at the Centre. The participants also participate in a Basic English language and maths programme.

Responsive provision

Participants in the group stated that they like coming to the classes because they are delivered at a pace and in a way that is very sensitive to their needs:

“We feel we can ask questions without feeling stupid or awkward.”

“The time is good for me because of my children.”

“I can come here because there is childcare on the premises.”

Integration and employability through language development

Through the basic literacy and numeracy programme, the centre offers Live and Learn beneficiary’s confidence building opportunities to facilitate their better integration within the local community:

“I can’t work because my English is not good enough and because I am on benefits and have children at school and in the crèche at the Women’s Centre. I would be very isolated without the centre and what it offers.”

“I have a job placement and improving my English and maths is a must to help me understand and to settle within the community. Coming here gives me more contact with other local women who we meet at the centre, in the cafe, in the office, or on other programmes. When I get stuck about something during the week, I write it down and we discuss it in the group and then I can understand what it has meant. And that helps us all. I couldn’t do that at the College and the confusion was terrible. I had nowhere to go with the confusion but here I get it all sorted out and my confusion is welcomed! It’s just great because it makes my life start to be real instead of all mixed up.”

Superior experience and support

The group strongly agreed that the educational experience at The Women’s Centre Derry is superior to that on offer at other places:

“The small group size is really important to me for learning. We all feel safe with each other and not embarrassed because we are learning – even though we are all at different levels. We help each other out because we know what it was like when we didn’t have any of the language. So those who are more skilled help the others out. We are all patient with each other and the teacher is very patient with us and takes her time to explain everything very clearly before we move on and she will go back over things again and again until we understand.”

“I went for a while to the Further Education College but it was no good for me. There were too many in the class and they had to follow a curriculum and I couldn’t keep up with the pace and the pressure. If you got behind, well that was your problem. There were so many different languages and the group size meant it was hard to get to know people. We are all foreign here but it’s not the same. This is much slower with no pressure around exams and the teacher follows us and not the curriculum. She makes it very relevant to our lives. We are all in the same situation in this class and we support each other.”

The Women’s Centre Derry participants’ response to the questionnaire completed:

Essential Skills development impacts criteria	Overall skills improvement	
	Some impact %	Major impact %
Overall my understanding of English – writing, reading, conversation, comprehension has improved		100
Skills learned will improve my chances to get a job		100
Skill learned will improve my quality of life and relationships	10	90
I feel more able to help my children with their home/schoolwork	19	100
General increase in self confidence/esteem		100
General health improved		100
		100

Confidence building

The consensus among the women was very strongly on the side of feeling much more confident and more empowered as a consequence of their experience and learning at The Women's Centre Derry.

Skills development

Participants agreed that their skills have improved through participation on the English programme and in particular, very specific knowledge of how to better understand the local idiom in Derry/Northern Ireland. This has greatly increased confidence enabling some women to progress to qualification training. This ripple effect of confidence building has then extended to other aspects of life and women are more empowered to seek further advice, information and guidance to assist them in other aspects of life and involvement in NI. Development of their skills has been of particular note as 70% of the women indicated they have been able to assist their children with their learning.

"We came here to give our children a better opportunity in life. That is the most important thing for me. Helping them to settle into school has been very important and to be able to help with homework is very necessary for their participation in class. When I cannot help, I can contact someone from the centre who can and then I can bring the problem to the class and understand better what I didn't know. Learning in this way is the best way to move forward and I learn something new every day. I was very depressed when I first arrived in Derry as I thought I would never be able to create a life for myself here and everything was so difficult and foreign. I cannot believe the progress I have made over the last two years thanks to the centre and my happiness level is very much improved."

Creating a new life in Northern Ireland

All of the women agreed that participation on the programme has enhanced their life in NI, has improved their knowledge of local services and their engagement within the community, will be of great benefit to their future employability and is a much needed support in the context of low income. Indeed having access to programmes that are funded is crucial to their engagement.

Health improvements

All the women noted that their mental health/well-being has improved because of being on the Live and Learn programme through feeling less isolated/depressed. This has helped them feel more confident which they feel has also had an impact on their families.

When asked what they considered to be the main benefits to them of being on the programme, comments made by women from the group included:

- *"To be more confident to speak, to meet, to understand, to read, to write and first of all to be listened."*
- *"We can get our children here for free – we have also the time and patience of the different teachers. We can speak and to be connected so get more confidence."*
- *"Its really very useful not only for English study but also for making me keep socialised. I like women's centre very much and want to join more different classes."*
- *"I can learn and practice English and I know that my children are safe. It is very useful."*
- *"Practice English, ask my doubts in a small group, meet people in same situation, get confidence. Free lessons help me to have a place to improve when our economic situation is not good."*
- *"There are so many benefits to me. This programme helps me to build my confidence. I didn't have much confidence. But now I am able to communicate with the Derry people. And the most important thing is that the courses are absolutely free. That's why we can easily join the class. I think we are so fortunate to have a centre like women's centre."*
- *"Spend lot time on own. Make sick. Better now."*

5.1.5 Outcome 6 Focus Group(s)

Outcome 6: To increase knowledge, confidence and skills to address stressful situations which impact negatively on mental health. (Providers: Falls, First Steps, Footprints, FWIN, Greenway, Magherafelt, Strathfoyle, Windsor). Focus group held with Strathfoyle Women's Activity Group.

A Focus Group was held at **Strathfoyle Women's Activity Group** in May 2011 with participants from a range of Live and Learn programmes. This event took place on the day that the Strathfoyle Older Women's Group Positive Ageing Programme meets and interviewees included Bella, Cecilia, Anne, Anne, Christina, Jean, Monica, Leslie, Deirdre, and Yvonne. Programmes funded by Live and Learn include:

- Holistic/Complementary Therapies – Mondays x 2 hour sessions over 3 terms;
- Positive Ageing (Social Interaction) – Wednesdays x 2 hour sessions over 3 terms;
- Look Good Feel Good - Wednesdays x 2 hour sessions over 3 terms;
- OCN Entry Level Horticulture Group – Wednesdays x 2 hour sessions over 3 terms;
- Healthy Eating/Weight Management Group – Fridays x 2 hour sessions over 3 terms;
- OCN Creative Jewellery Making – Fridays x 2 hour sessions over 3 terms.

Community development and health

All of the Live and Learn programmes have clear health benefits for the participants, the bulk of whom experience multiple disadvantages. All of the centres involved in the initiative have extensive experience in providing empowering provision arising from their community development engagement over many years. Strathfoyle Women's Centre is in the middle of a working class estate with a weak physical infrastructure which resulted in the community of local women taking action on their own behalf to create provision to meet their own needs:

"The women's centre has been here for 25 years! A testament to the days when there was nothing here and the women got together and started to do something for themselves. There are 1000+ of a population in this area and when the estate was built it's like they made a hole in the middle of nowhere, built houses and more or less left us to get on with it. There were no groups but ourselves for years. It's only six years ago that we even got a play area for the children. There is a youth club but it closes over the summer and during holidays so that doesn't help working parents at all. There is no health centre, no GP surgery, and no social centre for the community. Just a couple of shops selling basics. And the transport is appalling. The first bus out is 8.20 in the morning and the last bus back is 9.00pm from the centre of Derry. So God help you if you work shifts or if you are young and want a night out on the town or you want to go to the pictures or whatever. Its either taxis or shoe leather and there are, as you can see yourself, very few cars around here. It's particularly hard for older people and if the older women didn't have this place to come to they would be extremely isolated."

"We recently had an outing for older people from the area where we took them on a tour of Derry City and the Tower Museum. Very few of the ones over 80 had ever been to the museum and had never seen at least a good half of the city! The centre is a real life line within the community and for the community. We recently took part in a consultation for the play park with 'Groundwork'/Derry City Council where we were able to highlight the importance of seats for the elderly. We work with people of all ages – from cradle to grave – from getting the children enrolled with the dentist to helping the young mums leave their children for the first time, to helping them get back their confidence to go back to work, to helping organise after-schools and then right through to working with the grandparents. The 'Live and Learn' programme spans all the generations in this community."

"The older women especially love to come here. The Community Pharmacy Project was a great way to get a lot of the ones who wouldn't normally go to a centre, involved in activities for the first time. Through that project we really were able to make contact with the 'hard to reach'. They came here to get their blood pressure checked and find out about flu jabs and that and then before you know it they were in doing

armchair yoga/aerobics and reflexology and spiritual dancing. People in this community are very good at voting with their feet. So you know very fast if an activity is what is wanted or not. And if something goes down well then it spreads round the estate like wild fire and everyone wants a try. Once new people come in the door they are keen to have a go."

Health improvements

"I started coming because my friend had problems walking and her feet were very sore with the arthritis as mine were and she told me about the great relief she got from the reflexology so I came and had reflexology for the arthritis in my feet and shoulders and spine. I had my toe nails clipped and my finger nails. My fingers were very bent and I couldn't do those jobs myself. I got my feet and hands waxed and the difference it made was unbelievable so I come every week and I get facials and body massage and the pains that were wild are now so much better. I still have arthritis but I have more flexibility now than I had and I am walking a thousand times better than I did and I just generally feel far less stiff and sore all over. For me to be able to leave down a walking stick and go for a walk with some of the other women is just remarkable. It has made a huge difference to my quality of life and it gives me great comfort. And when you are a widow woman like me, it's unbelievable to know the comfort of touch. It's an amazing thing to get to this stage in your life and realise how powerful massage is. We never had that kind of thing in my day. I say to all the other woman that it's the most therapeutic thing they could do for themselves. It's a real blessing. Truly it is. Even something as simple as someone taking your hands in theirs and rubbing them for you with lovely scented oil is a real gift."

Aging well

"I started coming here when I was on benefits and had neither skills nor confidence. I started off doing IT and now I have a rake of qualifications."

"The women on this estate – especially the older women are all caregivers and they have all minded and are still minding children by the generations. The centre is for me 'ME time'. I'm only living now after years of looking after everybody else and I'm done with all that now. So the Positive Ageing programmes keep all of us older women happier, more active and better contributors within our community."

Making healthy contributions to the community

"Just getting together to talk and help each other out and share our complaints and woes and joys is what is important for us in the Positive Ageing Group."

"We made a lovely quilt recently and one of the pieces in the quilt had the husband in it of one of the women. Three of our group lost husbands over the last year. A terrible lot of mourning in one year. But together we pulled each other through it and women who wouldn't talk about their pain could slowly work it all out through the quilting. Slow and gentle like the needles. In and out like the needles. It takes a long time and progress is slow but it moves on with time. The quilt and the sorrow all mixed up together and us all a piece in it. I know myself that it takes a while to come to terms with life without him and another while to talk about him and another while to talk without crying. You feel you will never be able to talk about him and have a laugh about the things you did together. But you do and it's a great relief to laugh with other people who remember him too. After mine died, I took up driving, at 62, just so I could get here to the centre. I had to do it or I think I would have died myself sitting in the house."

"The Positive Ageing – Social Interaction Group produced this booklet – 'Yesteryears' which was a great distraction for us all, finding stories to tell, old photographs, talking about people we knew when we first came to live in the Estate 55 years ago, reliving memories etc. We loved doing the project and we are all so proud of the booklet and it's a wonderful testimony to leave for our children and grandchildren and the people in the area who want to know its history. It has given us great confidence now to take on another bigger project."

For the Focus Group with the Evaluator, the Live & Learn course group at Strathfoyle Women’s Activity Group nominated and agreed a spokesperson to attend and speak on behalf of the group. Following are the responses made:

Lesley on behalf of Positive Ageing Group

“The whole (Positive Ageing) group has grown in confidence, becoming more comfortable with each other’s company. Sharing stories and experiences brought us all closer together. It gave us all a more positive view of life and growing older. None of the women attending would have the money to get the treatments provided at the Centre if this group did not provide them. They are all so beneficial for health. People will tell you that their health and mental state are well improved. If I was to fill in the questionnaire on behalf of the whole group I would give between 4-5 as an answer to all the questions – people definitely feel their health and their confidence has improved across a whole range of measures.”

Yvonne on behalf of the Yoga Group

“The Yoga group has been a very, very positive experience for all the women attending. People have learned how to find ways to relax from all the stress and strain of life and the troubles and woes of raising families and having no money etc. There have definitely been improvements in mobility and posture and flexibility. It is a space to relax and unwind and to de-stress. Women take it into their homes and do their practice with other people in the family too at times so that it has a wider benefit beyond the class. If I was to fill in the questionnaire on behalf of the whole group I would give between 4-5 as an answer to all the questions – people definitely feel their health and their confidence has improved.”

Doreen on behalf of the Weight Management Group

“We get weighed weekly and we encourage each other to keep coming and to count our calories and points so that we keep on top of what we are eating and don’t allow it to go out of control. It’s very easy when you are cooking for a family to be tasting and trying everything out first and it’s very easy to put on extra pounds and not even see it happening. But the class makes us more aware of everything we eat and to keep track of it. We have good discussions and have learned about healthy options and to count fat and salt and sugar content in foodstuffs. I think the programme has also been important even for things like developing better social skills in the group. If I was to fill in the questionnaire on behalf of the whole group I would give 4-5 as an answer to all the questions.”

Following is a summary of participants’ response to the questionnaire:

Mental health impacts criteria	Overall skills improvement	
	Some impact %	Major impact %
Overall my skills have improved		100
Improved understanding of tools and strategies to help cope with/address stressful situations		100
Have made healthy changes to the way I live/respond to stressful or difficult situations		100
Feel more able/confident to talk about health or how I feel, with other people including professionals		100
Improve knowledge of where to get appropriate help and support as needed		100
General increase in self confidence/esteem		100
General health improved		100

5.2 Partnership Empowerment Principles

The 68 women interviewed at The Women’s Centre Derry (10), The Learning Lodge, Magherafelt (9), Shankill Women’s Centre (16), Chrysalis Women’s Centre, Lurgan (11), Falls Women’s Centre (5),

Strathfoyle Women’s Centre (16) and the Director of FWIN were asked to discuss the value of the Partnership Empowerment Principles for the Live and Learn Programmes outlined below:

- ✓ Women-only programmes
- ✓ Programme costs were free (i.e. covered by Big Lottery Fund)
- ✓ Childcare support (usually on site)
- ✓ Members of an ethnic minority group, people from all cultures, faith groups welcomed within a safe environment
- ✓ Safe environment provided to all women wishing to address their problems in a respectful, confidential, empowering and peer supporting environment
- ✓ Confidence building valued as a core component to growth and development
- ✓ Learning support available to assist women to work at their level and pace

100% of the participants and staff members interviewed recognised these elements as being of crucial importance in engagement, retention and progression, the bulk of the women stating they would be unable to participate in the programmes without these elements being present.

How important have the following issues been for you on the programme?

Criteria	I could not have participated without this	Very important but not essential	No influence on my decision	Not sure
Women-only programme	42	17	8	1
Programme costs were covered	59	9		1
Childcare available	All of the women at all of the Centres agreed that even if they did not need this provision themselves, they would fully support these criteria for all other women.			
I felt safe to talk about my problems	49	9	10	
Course was confidence building	62	6		

5.3 Quality Of Provision

One of the most rewarding aspects of the evaluation has been the emphasis beneficiaries have been forthright in expressing in relation to the quality of the inputs received. Programme content and delivery has been of the highest value. The centres have gone ‘the extra mile in responding to the needs of the women, delivering programmes at a pace and level to assist learning. All 68 women interviewees rated the support received from the centre as either ‘Excellent’ or ‘Above Average’ with 90+% as ‘Excellent’.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 Achievement Of Targets

The qualitative and quantitative details outlined in this report highlight the success of the Live and Learn project in achieving the aims and objectives set by the WLPP and the centres involved. The Live and Learn programme has exceeded its targets for 2010-2011 in almost all of the target areas which were specified at the outset.

Targets 2010-2011	Achievement 2010-2011	Target by Training Places
324 women access physical health programmes	810 training places 373 new beneficiaries	Target exceeded by 250%.
385 access confidence building to enhance employability	1864 training places 699 new beneficiaries	Target exceeded by 484%.
190 ethnic minorities access language skills and social support	166 training places 65 new beneficiaries	Target partially met by 87%.
400 copies regional prospectus delivered	1400 copies produced 400 new beneficiaries	Target fully met.
189 increase maths/literacy skills to support selves and family	434 training places 145 new beneficiaries	Target exceeded by 230%.
410 access support for mental health	1264 training places 481 new beneficiaries	Target exceeded by 308%.
Total 1,898	4,538 with 2,163 new beneficiaries	Targets exceeded overall by 239%*

*Based on the number of training places to the Live & Learn in Year 2 (excludes prospectus).

Live and Learn beneficiaries are predominantly unemployed/economically inactive women, a significant number of whom are lone parents, people living alone, women with caring responsibilities and women with poor health/disability, for whom training paid for by the BLF adds quality to their lives. WLPP has also been successful in some cases in recruiting women who are migrants/refugees and/ ethnic minorities, and although the target for engagement of women from these groupings is less than anticipated this year, work done with these women and their families has often been labour intensive and more time consuming due to their nature of their needs as evidenced by the work at Fall's Women's Centre.

6.2 Programme Management

The bulk of the BLF fund is allocated to the delivery agents to meet the needs identified by the women in their communities. The small fraction which addresses the project management needs of WRDA as the lead organisation responsible for overseeing all administrative and financial aspects of the project is spent sparingly and given the complexity, depth and breadth of the project provides excellent value for money. There is often no or limited project management funding to the groups for monitoring and completion of returns. Nonetheless, high quality products are being delivered via all the Live and Learn programmes reviewed and the Centres have succeeded in recruiting the target participants they seek to attract. Retention levels are high and at least 31% of the women enrolled are progressing to other programmes, activities or into employment. Accredited and non-accredited training programmes are being delivered

from Level 1 to Level 3. In exceeding the targets, centres are providing excellent value for money and providing more classes than agreed, to accommodate the needs of the women and the waiting lists at the centres. Anticipated targets over the next five years are likely to be exceeded.

Delivery agents have felt supported and encouraged by the WRDA / WCRP team.

6.3 Effectiveness In Building Social Capital

Definitions of social capital encompass a range of factors including active connections built between people who have developed an understanding and common values that allow them to co-operate with and support each other, enabling that society to function effectively and help them solve common problems. Thus, social capital builds what may be termed as 'social infrastructure'. Community Evaluation NI (CENI) sees social capital as having three key dimensions in helping achieve cohesion and connectedness in communities: '*Bonding*', '*Bridging*' and '*Linking*' capital. '*Bonding*' occurs within a community; '*Bridging*' is between communities; and '*Linking*' is across agencies and communities through partnership building.³

Detailed case studies have been gathered from 1-1 interviews conducted at all centres during this evaluation which attest to the high degree of 'bonding' that has taken place between the women attending at the Live and Learn events and their additional engagement within the centres as volunteers and peer supporters. Within their community settings this bonding creates a connectedness between the women that must underpin a positive social infrastructure based on values of support, kindness and caring, supplemented by a range of skills which can be shared within the community.

All of the women's centres participate in a range of activities engaging with groups who are from other communities. This may include cross community, cross border, joint workshops with different ethnic and cultural groups, different ages and different levels of physical and sensory abilities. 'Bridging' connections are evident between women who would otherwise remain isolated from each other and unaware of each other's life experiences and concerns. For example Chrysalis Women's Centre supports capacity building by the women within the community. As a consequence of the confidence and skills gained through the Live and Learn programme at Chrysalis, the women have started taking a more active role within their local community including volunteering to help on school trips, assisting teachers within the classroom and working within the local Parent Teacher Association. Three have joined management groups and all of the women participate in 'The Friday Club' – an organically evolved group started up by the women to improve their quality of life. The group is linked with the Southern Area Health Trust which takes referrals from GPs and membership of both the group and Chrysalis has been broadened through this engagement. The women choose the activities and there is a walking and cycling group. They have benefited from free sports activities offered to them, including water sports, swimming, canoeing, etc. The gardening group is part of the Friday Club and women are now able to 'harvest' enough vegetables to put on display at local events where they are able to show their extensive market garden produce. The group hope, in the future, to create a social economy project where they can grow vegetables for sale, make hanging baskets and window boxes etc and put money back into the centre. The group have made links with Sure Start and Scouting UK, and are involved in a cross-community/cross border scouting project. 'Facebook' social networking has been established and the women are able to make contact with other women, other groups and individuals within the area, advertising activities through this medium. Engagement by the Polish women within the community has grown to such an extent that there are now two Polish women's groups operating out of the centre.

Interviews with all the centre managers evidence the commitment of the women's sector to 'linking capital' and the resultant increased efficiency and effectiveness through joint working in line with the

³ For further elaboration on these terms, see Year 1 Live and Learn report online at: http://www.wcrp.org.uk/cms/data/upimages/L_L_Evaluation_Nov_2010_Final_Draft_version2.pdf

WLPP's commitment to partnership working and resonant with the overall aim of the Live & Learn programme.

This report provides two different instances (below) of how social capital has been built within the Live and Learn initiative through referencing two different types of exemplars: the first evidencing strategic work done by Foyle Women's Information Network (FWIN) and the second 'grassroots' work done by Falls Women's Centre. Indeed the evaluator could have taken any of the 14 Live and Learn centres to exemplify the kind of excellent work done 'on the ground'.

6.3.1 Foyle Women's Information Network (FWIN)

FWIN is an information network for community based women's centres, group's, individuals and organisations. Its mission is to increase the capacity, visibility and voice of women throughout the North West. FWIN is a partner of the WLPP and aims to deliver across five of the Live & Learn outcome areas. They receive a budget to run 10 information events/ seminars per year and 4 local neighbourhood health events. These events have been well received by beneficiaries.

Over the last year FWIN has built **bonding** through community capacity building training programmes tailored to meet the needs of local women's groups in the North West.

In addition, FWIN creates networking opportunities to bring together groups who would not normally create the circumstances themselves to make contact thus enabling them to collaborate around a range of issues and themes. FWIN sends emails weekly to 256 members and posts information to 153 groups, in addition to six newsletters each year. Events are hosted in neutral venues and shared public spaces to assist women in moving out of their familiar surroundings. In taking opportunities arising from peace funding, FWIN encourages women to move out of 'single identity' areas and experience the lives of other women from differing and 'other' political, religious, cultural or class experiences – **bridging** and organisational **linking** activities.

FWIN networks with a wide range of organisations. Through these contacts, FWIN have helped broker relationships between women's centres, individual women, community groups, statutory agencies, governmental bodies, political representatives, faith groups, and funding agencies. FWIN promotes the development of shared values which include working collaboratively and inclusively around gender issues to empower women to address needs and issues facing them.

FWIN recognises that the notion of 'reclaiming public life' is vital to the development of good relations in a society moving from conflict and that improving social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Creating **bonding** within a community where resources are available 'on the door-step' to help communities strengthen their core and grow 'internally' is fundamental to rebuilding and repairing the devastation and trauma incurred over 30 years of warfare with bonding linked to health opportunities providing a double benefit.

Such bonding work is reflected in the community health events organised by FWIN, where local organisations are brought in and local people are consulted with to decide how best their health budget will be used to and meet needs identified. This bottom-up approach builds skills in the local community, enables local leadership to flourish and the pool of volunteers to grow. Local volunteers know best who is most isolated/hardest to reach/most vulnerable in the community and informal offers of 'I'll pick you up and go with you/take you' flourishes. This means 'new' users are introduced to services they wouldn't otherwise access. In some instances, this can be life saving as shown by the health event in Currynievin in November 2010 when 4 people, new to participation, were referred by Action Cancer to the hospital for treatment. These people would not have made their way to the cancer bus without being taken by a volunteer.

Similarly FWIN's health strategy provides a useful focus for creating **bridging** capital across communities divided by conflict. Last year's summer school organised by FWIN brought together old neighbours displaced by the troubles who hadn't seen each other in 30 years, some of whom worked together in the shirt factories for 10-20 years while rearing their children and then moved away because of social upheaval, redevelopment or displacement to the Republic of Ireland. Cross-border/cross-community trips created a bridge between people who would not otherwise have met yet together enjoyed a study trip to the Famine Museum in Donegal where knowledge was both widened and shared. As one woman said, *"being captive on a bus for 1.5 hours meant we shared songs and seats and stories and sandwiches with people we would never have ventured out to meet normally."* A quilt hanging in the Equality Commission in Belfast was made by women from Tullyally and from Galliagh Women's Groups. This cross community activity bringing together Catholic and Protestant women was facilitated by FWIN's Live and Learn funding.

In assisting local groups to take action in relation to issues affecting them – hospital closures/chest, heart and stroke engagement/cancer bus access etc, FWIN encourages groups to combine for campaigning and lobbying purposes. **Linking** is therefore a key activity of FWIN as both a networking and partnership facilitation agency as exemplified by a joint workshop with WRDA and the Women's Ad Hoc Policy Group held during the NI Assembly and Local Government Elections in April 2011. Speakers included representatives from FWIN, WRDA, Equality Commission, Derry City Council, Creggan Community Association, The Training Trust, Women into Public Life, Foyle Women's Aid, NIRWN, Bogside/Brandywell women's health organisation (Pink Ladies), Inez McCormack and representatives from UUP, Sinn Fein, SDLP, DUP and other candidates.

FWIN invest 100% of the Live and Learn grant to cover beneficiary costs only. FWIN do not get any management, admin, travel or any other fees from their Live and Learn budget.

6.3.2 Falls Women's Centre

The example below shows building social capital at a local level through **bonding**, **bridging** and **linking** through work done within the last year by the Live and Learn project worker at Fall's Women's Centre. This example is in relation to only one area of work –the provision of advice services and ongoing support to ethnic minority women. It shows ways in which the women have been supported with a high quality service led by a part-time worker at the women's centre.

"Over the past year six Chinese women from six different and unrelated families, have asked for help with the transition from asylum-seeker to refugee status. They have all been attending classes and social events, and accessing other services in the centre."

"When a person is given leave to remain in this country, they must leave their National Asylum Support Service (NASS) accommodation within 4 weeks and thus need help to approach the Department of Social Security (DSS), and Housing Executive (HE) for alternative housing. The procedure is to start the process of claiming benefits and getting an NI number, and when they leave the NASS house they must present as homeless to the HE. If they don't leave the NASS house the locks are changed. It is a very stressful time for women, and they may see Fall's Women's Centre staff for support at least twice a week during this period."

"Although familiar with West Belfast, it is unlikely that families will be re-housed in this area. The HE is only responsible for offering emergency accommodation. Three of the women supported by Falls were initially offered accommodation in Derry, Downpatrick and Rathcoole. Fall's Women's Centre represented each case until an alternative can be found. In some cases women decide to move in temporarily with friends, in which case they need help to find private accommodation. Other families have no friend to fall back on, and need help to move house (transport and help to move belongings)." Fall's Women's Centre has helped 3 families in this situation.

“Once a family is re-housed they still need help: to find a new school or nursery, apply for tax credits, child benefit, negotiate with landlords, etc. Tax credit and benefit claims are often complex because the woman’s husband is self-employed, so the advice workers spend a lot of time on this.”

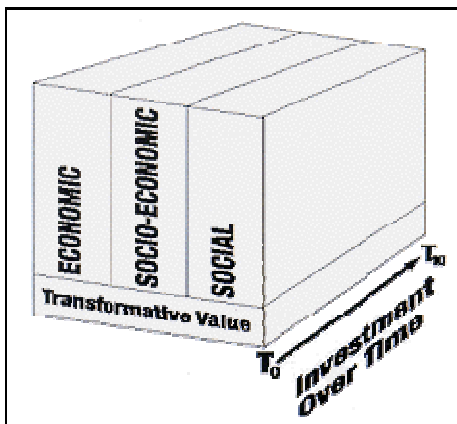
“On the other hand, having refugee status opens up new opportunities so that women ask for help with driving licence applications, passport, citizenship test materials etc. Although we try to refer women to the Chinese Welfare Association for help with forms, they state their preference is to use Fall’s Women’s Centre where people are friendly and we can always get help.”

Outcomes for the work with this group of 6 women

- 6 families successfully re-housed in Belfast (as opposed to Derry etc, which would disrupt children’s ongoing education and connections established at School, existing and ongoing links with the local community and network of other Chinese families assisted by Falls, etc)
- 6 women helped to claim benefits, tax credits, child benefit, etc
- 6 women helped with ongoing issues (see above)
- 5 continue to attend classes, (4 new ethnic minority participants brought in through word of mouth)
- 5 women progressed to accredited courses with learning and language support
- 4 women given childcare places and places on Falls summer scheme

Fall’s Women’s Centre works closely with other agencies to delivery their service such as Bryson House Service for Asylum-seekers, Law Centre, Barnardo’s Ethnic Minority Family Support, Housing Executive, Department of Social Security, NICRAS, Sure Start and Home Start.

6.4 Social Return on Investment (SROI)



The Live and Learn project hopes that through investing in the three types of value - (economic, socio-economic and social) over the five year period 2009-2014, the transformative values of increased health and well being, skills development to assist integration of ethnic minorities, employment and educational progression will be realised. The central purpose of the non-profit sector is to create some type of change to transform our society and world for the better. Transformative value becomes the basic foundation upon which the other three types of value are based.

The Seven Principles of Social return On Investment ⁴		
Principle	Criteria	How Live and Learn has met the criteria/principle
Involve stakeholders	Inform what gets measured and how this is measured and valued by involving stakeholders	Stakeholders identified and involved in consultation throughout. Live and Learn activity is measured and informed by those affected by its activities and those who affect the activity.
Understand what changes	Articulate how change is created and evaluate this through evidence gathered, recognising positive and negative changes as well as those that are intended and unintended.	Outcomes and impacts are identified as the five target areas and changes in relation to these areas are assessed through end of programme evaluation forms, distance measured questionnaires, self assessment by beneficiaries of achievement of goals, qualification achievements, volunteering activity, progression to employment, engagement within the community etc. 1-1 interviews and focus groups held with an external evaluator provide additional evidence. External evidence provided by non-stakeholders signifies impacts and changes – e.g. increasing number of referrals by GPs, health visitors, progression on to higher level programmes, college or work opportunities.
Value the things that matter	Use financial proxies in order that the value of the outcomes can be recognised.	<p>The outcomes for Live and Learn are not traded in markets and as a result their value is hard to measure in financial terms. The beneficiaries are people on low income. They are not customers though they are consumers. Centres record 'value' through retention, progression and satisfaction rates of women. Women record engagement opportunities as improvements shown in mental and physical health, skills development and confidence building with programmes providing 'a life line'; as 'giving me a reason to get up in the morning'; as being 'a life saver'; of 'saving me from going out of my mind looking at the four walls', etc.</p> <p>Training places in Year 2 are averaged at a cost of £47.05 per person, per place. This represents exceptional value for money.</p>
Only include what is material:	Determine what information and evidence must be included in the accounts to give a true and fair picture, such that stakeholders can draw reasonable conclusions	The original application and the Year 1 report note the extensive research and consultations completed by centres to justify needs, identify engagement strategies and plan responsive service delivery. Structures established by WLPP have provided the mechanisms to test, validate

⁴ SROI Network, <http://www.thesroinetwork.org/>

	about impact.	and verify. These structures provide organic and ongoing processes to review and adapt to changing circumstances and need on the basis of any new or changing information. On site advice, information and guidance services at Live and Learn centres ensure that 1-1 needs are captured at recruitment and reviewed at completion to ensure the development of appropriate progression routes.
Do not over-claim	Only claim the value that organisations are responsible for creating	Live and Learn centres receive only project costs, no centre receives management fees. All Live and Learn centres provide added value in the delivery of their programmes. Information in this report relates to Live and Learn achievements.
Be transparent	Demonstrate the basis on which the analysis may be considered accurate and honest, and show that it will be reported to and discussed with stakeholders	The external evaluator has participated in, has observed the workings of or reviewed appropriate minutes relating to the operation of all of the decision making structures. Copies of all information collected via returns from centres, reports to the BLF, evaluation reports etc have been sent to the external evaluator; focus groups and 1-1 interviews have been conducted by the evaluator and reports from these meetings have been sent to WCRP and centres along with scenario documented. All centres will receive a copy of the final evaluation report which will also be made available on the WCRP website.
Verify the result	Ensure appropriate independent assurance	Understanding of the value created by Live and Learn is documented throughout this report and verified by the independent evaluator.

6.0 Recommendations

'Live and Learn' is a powerful initiative. It is helping to change the lives of countless women in Northern Ireland and is strengthening communities. Many of the centres are delivering more than their agreed targets and are 'going the extra mile' in responding to the needs of their client groups. Recruitment, retention and progression rates are excellent and the WRDA/WRCP/WLLP are working hard to manage the initiative efficiently and effectively.

1. The 'shared learning' framework, which provides an opportunity for the women's centres to explore the range of activities provided within each of the thematic areas, enabled the facilitation of an excellent seminar focusing on 'health' in 2011. **It is recommended that the shared learning seminars for 2011-2012 focus on the excellent good practice that has developed in relation to the recruitment, retention and progression of black and ethnic minority women so that the agreed targets for engagement may continue to rise.**
2. The evaluator and WLPP have recorded many instances of good practice developed throughout the life of the project. **It is recommended that the partnership explore ways of disseminating these outcomes.** It is particularly recommended that the partnership contact the local television and radio programmers to profile Live and Learn and the excellent work of the centres and to highlight the importance of funding to the Women's Sector in meeting the needs of women and particularly 'hard to reach' women. Consideration should be given to discussions with the BLF in relation to profiling the value for money and the social capital achieved through this initiative and how best to publicise successes.
3. **It is recommended that the relevant governmental ministers be invited to meet with WLPP partners and centres to identify how best the excellent work of the projects may become core funded through a DEL/DSD/DHSSPS partnership.**
4. **It is also recommended that WLPP present the findings from the ongoing Live & Learn evaluations to DEL, seeking to influence their community education priorities** - most explicitly represented in the policy implementation plan, 'FE Means Business', which does not address the barriers to engagement for women on low income and with low confidence. No/low cost 'capacity building' programmes within the further education (FE) sector are nonexistent or very thin on the ground, outside the essential skills programme which is very narrowly defined and set within a context which allows for very limited innovation.
5. Finally, **it is recommended that all the Live and Learn centres explore Social Return on Investment (SROI)** in order to further consider ways to value the impact of their work. Further information in relation to SROI may be obtained from:
http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/library/Resources/BCC/Evidence/SROI_on_CD_Final_Report_CDF_Oct_2010.pdf
Some centres have recently done some work on SROI and a report is available at:
http://www.wsn.org.uk/files/file/WSN_SROI%20Reports_Falls_Shankhill_Windsor_FINAL_Aug11.pdf

Appendix 1 - Organisations in the WCRP

The women's organisations in the WCRP are:

1. The **Women's Resource and Development Agency** (lead and strategic partner) – 6 Mount Charles, Belfast BT7 1NZ <http://www.wrda.net/>
2. The **Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network** (strategic partner) – 15 Molesworth Street, Cookstown, BT80 8NX www.nirwn.org.uk/
3. The **Women's Support Network** (strategic partner) – 2nd Floor, 109 -113 Royal Avenue, Belfast BT1 1FF www.wsn.org.uk/
4. The **Women's Centre Derry** (strategic partner and delivery organisation in the Live and Learn project) – Beibhinn House, 5 Guildhall Street, Derry, BT48 6BB www.thewomenscentre.co.uk/
5. **Atlas Women's Centre** (delivery organisation in the Live and Learn project) - 81 Sloan Street, Lisburn BT27 5AG www.atlaswomenscentre.com/
6. **Ballybeen Women's Centre** (delivery organisation in the Live and Learn project) – 34 Ballybeen Square, Belfast BT16 2QE www.ballybeenwomenscentre.org/
7. **Chrysalis Women's Centre** (delivery organisation in the Live and learn project) – 520 Burnside, Brownlow, Craigavon BT65 5DE www.communityni.org/organisation/chrysalis-womens-centre
8. **Falls Women's Centre** (delivery organisation in the Live and learn project) – 256 -258 Falls Road, Belfast BT12 6AL www.fallswomenscentre.org/
9. **Foyle Women's Information Network** (delivery organisation in the Live and Learn project) –, L The Walled City Community Partnership, 12-14 The Diamond, Derry~Londonderry, BT48 6HW www.fwin.org.uk/
10. **First Steps Women's Centre** (delivery organisation in the Live and learn project) – 21a William Street Dungannon , BT70 1 DX <http://www.southtyronewomenscentre.org/>
11. **Footprints Women's Centre** (delivery organisation in the Live and Learn project) - 84a Colinmill, Poleglass BT17 0AR www.footprintswomenscentre.org/
12. **Greenway Women's Centre** (delivery organisation in the Live and Learn project) – 19 Greenway, Cregagh Road Belfast BT6 0DT www.thewomenscentre.co.uk/
13. **The Learning Lodge, Magherafelt Women's Group** (delivery organisation in the Live and Learn project) – 27-29 Moneymore Road, Magherafelt BT45 5JE www.thelearninglodge.co.uk/
14. **Shankill Women's Centre** (delivery organisation in the Live and Learn project) – 151 – 157 Shankill Road, Belfast BT13 1FD www.shankillwomenscentre.org.uk/
15. **Strathfoyle Women's Centre** (delivery organisation in the Live and Learn project) – 12 Bawnmore Place, Strathfoyle BT47 6XP www.strathfoylewomenscentre.org/
16. **Waterside Women's Centre** (delivery organisation in the Live and Learn project) – 170 Spencer Road Waterside, Derry BT47 6AH www.watersidewomen.net/
17. **Windsor Women's Centre** (delivery organisation in the Live and Learn project) – 136 -144 Broadway, Belfast BT12 6HY www.windsorwomenscentre.co.uk/

Aims of WCRP and women's organisations in the WCRP can be found at <http://www.wcrp.org.uk/>