

THE WOMENS TEC (TRAINING, ENTERPRISE & CHILDCARE CENTRE)

DIRECTORS' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

The directors present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2025.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's governing document, the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and the Charities SORP "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)".

Objectives and activities

a. Policies and objectives

Mission: "Enable women and girls to access careers in industries where they are under-represented."

Vision: "An inclusive, sustainable society and economy where women and girls can reach their full potential and thrive."

WOMEN'STEC is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland with the following aims:

- To prevent and/or relieve poverty and advance education and training in Northern Ireland; and
- To provide facilities in the interest of advancing women's involvement in sectors of training and employment that have low levels of female participation, specifically women who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

The purpose of WOMEN'STEC is the advancement of education and the prevention and relief of poverty and unemployment, in particular of women and girls aged 12 or over living in Northern Ireland.

b. Strategies for achieving objectives

During 2024 – 2025, the strategic priorities, as outlined within our 2024-2027 strategic plan, that have driven our annual operational priorities include:

1. **Training of women:** Deliver high-quality training programmes to enable women to develop the confidence and skills and build successful careers, particularly in industries in which they are under-represented.
2. **Training of children and young people:** To work with girls to increase awareness of career stereotypes and opportunities in industries where women and girls are under-represented, particularly construction.
3. **Working with employers:** Work with employers and industry bodies to promote a diverse and inclusive workforce and workplace.
4. **Influencing public policy and practice:** Contribute to the development of government policy and practice in support of WOMEN'STEC mission.
5. **Research and evaluation:** Ensure the organisation has the appropriate data and analysis to operate effectively and continuously improve.
6. **Premises, technical and physical resources:** Ensure the organisation has the premises and other technical and physical resources to achieve its aims and objectives and these are effectively maintained and managed.
7. **Human Resources:** Ensure the organisation has the staff to achieve its aims and objectives and these staff are effectively supported, managed and have the opportunity to develop.
8. **Finances:** Ensure WOMEN'STEC has the financial resources it needs to achieve its aims and objectives, and these resources are effectively planned, managed and reported on.
9. **Communications:** Ensure WOMEN'STEC effectively communicates with all its stakeholders.
10. **Governance:** Ensure the governance of WOMEN'STEC complies with the requirements of the law and best practice.

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Our strategy sets out 10 strategic priorities that we will work towards over the next four years, building upon the foundations laid during the previous years and embracing a sense of optimism for the future. Our mission is clear: to enable women and girls to access careers in industries where they are under-represented. Our plan is not just a roadmap; it is a living testament to our dedication to creating an inclusive, sustainable society and economy where women and girls can reach their full potential and thrive.

Our strategic plan is underpinned by the values of inclusion, equality, empowerment and sustainability. In ensuring we are continually striving to work towards our priorities, we undertook operational planning between November 2024 – February 2025 to identify objectives for the second year of implementation of our strategic plan and will continue this process on an annual basis.

c. Activities for achieving objectives

In delivering on our strategic priorities, we have two core target participant groups: women returners and children and young people, which our programmes and services are targeted to in working to achieve our charity's aims and objectives. There are four core programmes that target the two core participant groups; Connect 4 Women, Sustaining Tenancies, Building Futures and Promoting Opportunities: Error in formula ->#NotJustForBoys<-. In addition, we delivered additional programmes which align with our aims and objectives and provide additional opportunities for the two core groups.

Connect 4 Women

This year represented the final year of the Connect 4 Women programme, a programme led by WOMEN'STEC and delivered in partnership with Glow NI and Shankill Women's Centre. The five-year programme, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, brings together the unique strengths of three women's organisations to provide participants (women returners) with activities, services and support aimed at improving life opportunities for women across north and west Belfast. Participants are offered skills training (accredited and non-accredited in trades and IT), adult learning (essential skills, GCSE Maths and English) and personal development, supported by other complementary courses designed to bolster skills and knowledge. It provides a personalised pathway of training and development in a way that is suited to their needs and personal situations, supporting them further with wraparound services such as childcare, health and wellbeing, and advice and support in accessing further training, employment or volunteering.

During this final year, WOMEN'STEC's focus was on delivering skills courses, whilst our programme partners focused on maths / English qualifications and personal development. In previous years, we also delivered personal development courses through Connect 4 Women, however in the final year we focused on DIY, other trades, car maintenance and driving theory courses and providing one-to-one support for progression for the programme coming to an end. WOMEN'STEC directly supported 99 women from north and west Belfast.

This year, we delivered courses in DIY, Tiling and Construction, Plumbing, Gardening, Car Maintenance and Driving Theory. One of our DIY courses was delivered to a group of women who are deaf, with tailored support in place to ensure full accessibility and inclusion. This was the first time we have delivered a course like this, and it was great to work with the group and their interpreters to test out the best way to adapt our teaching styles and demonstrations to support them learning DIY skills. As this was the final year, we worked closely with the externally appointed evaluators who have been involved since year 2 of the programme, to produce a final evaluation report. Over the five years of the Connect 4 Women project, our partnership supported 610 women across north and west Belfast to build skills, confidence, wellbeing and social connection. Delivery spanned from formal and informal learning, skills training, personal development and access to wraparound support. Despite significant disruption caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic in the first 3 years of the project, our partnership successfully pivoted to offer flexible, participant-led provision that responded to changing needs.

The Connect 4 Women project generated significant learning, both for the three partner organisations and for the wider women's sector. One of the most valuable insights was the strength and effectiveness of a partnership model that enables each organisation to focus on its core expertise. The evaluation confirmed that this approach allowed the partnership to deliver a genuinely holistic, person-centred programme which met women's practical, emotional and educational needs. Glow NI's focus on personal development and resilience support, Shankill Women's Centre's delivery of essential skills and accredited qualifications, and WOMEN'STEC's expertise in practical and non-traditional skills training together created a joined-up, wraparound offer that would not have been possible individually.

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The evaluation found this structure particularly effective in supporting women facing multiple barriers, as it offered progression routes that were flexible and responsive rather than linear.

Another key area of learning was the critical importance of wellbeing and one-to-one emotional support as core delivery elements rather than optional add-ons. The external evaluation highlighted that for many participants, particularly in the early pandemic years, the programme served as a “lifeline.” The combination of learning and wellbeing activities was instrumental in reducing social isolation, improving confidence, and enhancing participants’ capacity to cope with the wider social and economic pressures arising from COVID-19. This reinforced the need for future skills and employability programmes to integrate emotional wellbeing and mental health support as a foundational component, especially when working with women who have experienced trauma, caring responsibilities or prolonged social isolation.

Within WOMEN’STEC, the evaluation has directly informed organisational learning and development. Insights from the project have influenced the design of new programmes, ensuring wellbeing and one-to-one emotional support are embedded as standard within all training and employability activity.

Sustaining Tenancies

This programme, funded through the Northern Ireland Housing Executive’s Sustaining Tenancies programme, entered its second and final year in April 2023 and ran on until June 2024. The programme was aimed at supporting two cohorts of women annually (women returners and young mothers), living in Housing Executive homes to thrive in their home environment and increase their opportunities for life and work that will all contribute to increasing their likelihood of sustaining their tenancies and reaching their full potential. Delivery included an 8-week personal development programme, a 10-week home DIY programme, a 6-week life and employability skills programme, and one-to-one support with issues impacting their tenancies, employment or employability-related support, and emergency crisis support. Additionally, the programme facilitates open dialogue between participants and the Housing Executive, where they can discuss issues around home repairs and connect with their local Patch Manager.

32 women aged 25+ and 16 young mothers completed various aspects of the programme. This included a personal development programme, a DIY programme, a Life and Employability Skills programme, two community services information days, one-to-one support and a celebration event. Many of the women involved spoke about the programme’s benefits in terms of the overwhelmingly positive impact on their lives. Feedback from women who live in social housing who have participated in our programmes shows that this target group find it difficult to access support to improve their skills and build their confidence to enable them to even begin searching for a job. Developing their ‘soft’ skills, reducing social anxiety, and gaining a support circle are often the important outcomes that participants want to achieve. When they come to WOMEN’STEC, this is often the first step in their journey back to employment or improving their life situations. Many of the participants viewed the programme as a lifeline which, in their opinion, changed their lives; ‘I am now able to do DIY in my home which I am very proud of because of the skills I have learned at WOMEN’STEC. My personal development has fantastically improved. I am now more confident in my life. And beginning to love and accept my new me;’ ‘This course has been brilliant for making friendships. Everyone on the course has been great helping each other with the task, it has helped me feel more confident in trying out DIY at home and I look forward to coming back to try more courses.’ Two students became volunteers at WOMEN’STEC, helping in the workshop, in classes, and assisting with the summer schemes. The programme allowed WOMEN’STEC to deliver training and workshops to women who live in Housing Executive homes. There was no restriction on age, which allowed us to deliver to an older age group who normally cannot access this type of training. In terms of promoting the impact of the programme, some students have been involved in speaking at events with key stakeholders for the Housing Executive to share their experiences of the Sustaining Tenancies programmes.

Building Futures Partnership Programme

WOMEN’STEC, as lead partner, was awarded over £870,000 over 2 years by the UK Government’s Shared Prosperity Fund, to deliver a partnership programme with Bolster Community and Women in Business, focused on reducing economic inactivity. This programme, entitled ‘Building Futures’, began in April 2023 and focuses on women who are economically inactive in the Newry, Mourne and Down and Greater Belfast regions.

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During 2024/2025, the WOMEN'STEC team working on Building Futures directly supported 244 women across Belfast (143 women) and Newry, Mourne and Down (101). Further women were supported on the programme, however these were directly supported by our Building Futures partner, Bolster Community and specifically for the Newry, Mourne and Down region. We are reporting the direct support provided by WOMEN'STEC. Through this programme, the following activities were delivered:

- 11 DIY courses
- 12 accredited trade courses
- 8 employability skills courses
- 4 health, wellbeing & personal development courses
- 132 participants received an accreditation

The expanse of delivery ranged across a wide geographical area in the Newry, Mourne and Down (NMD) region and greater Belfast, particularly bringing services to women in rurally isolated communities where fewer opportunities exist for training, support and development. Our partner, Bolster Community, led on the delivery of personal development, IT, work support and numeracy courses, such as Basic Maths for Parents, and Managing Finances, in the NMD region, whilst Women in Business led on the delivery of business start-up / entrepreneurship courses across the programme areas. WOMEN'STEC led on the delivery of all construction and DIY related courses across the programme and IT and employability support in the Belfast area. Alongside the programme, an important element for participants is access to one-to-one mentoring support from the programme's employability and support officers, one based in WOMEN'STEC in Belfast, and one based in Bolster Community in Newry. This support offers tailored personal support to participants to help with their CV's, interview skills, plans for professional development, identifying areas for developing and supporting them with job search and connections to employers. With this, participants have access to bursary funds that can support them with studying or training for qualifications or certifications that are not offered through the programme but will enable them to pursue their employment goals.

Promoting Opportunities Programme: # NotJustForBoys

Our flagship youth programme, POP: # NotJustForBoys, which challenges misconceptions and encourages, empowers and supports young girls to consider career opportunities in sectors where women are under-represented, continued to grow and develop in 2024-2025.

Our Afterschool Clubs continued again this year, where local schoolgirls attend each week during term time to learn skills and work on a project. In May, girls from Trinity College completed their project to build two work benches for local nursery schools. JP Corry continued to support the Afterschool Club by supplying materials, organising a site visit, and providing staff time to support the girls with their project. A new Afterschool Club was established in St Coleman's High School, Ballynahinch, where students attended each week and learned DIY skills and built various projects to take home.

The Building Girls programme, targeting girls of primary school age, continued in 2024-2025. In January, we brought the programme to Carrs Glen Primary School and Holy Cross Primary School, over an 8 week period, working with 31 girls. The programme introduces girls aged 10-11 to basic handtools, construction skills and careers in non-traditional sectors. With their new skills, the girls created key rings and key holders, learned how to put up shelves on a stud wall and made jar holders from wood. The 'Introduction to Construction' primary school programme delivered 12 workshops to 4 primary schools, engaging with 81 girls in bricklaying and joinery skills.

At the end of 2023, we successfully secured funding from Children in Need to deliver various programmes aimed at expanding the reach of Error in formula ->#NotJustForBoys<- and engaging with girls in youth clubs. Through this, we have worked with R City Youth Girl's Group, USEL's youth club and Holy Family youth group, as well as girls from Hilltown in Newry in 2024-2025.

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In the summer, the '# NotJustForBoys ' team delivered three summer schemes. This year, we delivered two summer schemes in the Newry, Mourne and Down region and one summer scheme in Belfast. In July, the Kilkeel summer scheme engaged with 10 girls to introduce them to basic construction and DIY skills. The girls learned to put up a shelf, built test tube holders and coat hooks, and decorated their personal projects with paint. This provided an opportunity for the participants to build their confidence, think creatively, and gain an insight into the opportunities within construction. In Belfast, we delivered a summer scheme sponsored by our # NotJustForBoys Champion, Harland and Wolff. This summer scheme focused on boat building, where students learned to design and build two boats, whilst learning basic trade skills in drilling, sawing and painting and decorating. Working with Harland and Wolff, the summer scheme aimed to educate and inspire girls about careers in the maritime industry, consider the environment and introduce them to basic trade skills. When the boats were completed, they were taken to the River Lagan to be included in Belfast City Council's boat parade, WaterWorks, on Saturday 3rd August. In August, the final summer scheme was delivered in Crossmaglen with Magnet Youth Centre. This summer scheme focused on learning basic trade and DIY skills and inspiring the participants to consider careers in construction.

In 2024-2025, our # NotJustForBoys Youth Ambassadors Group was established. The # NotJustForBoys Youth Ambassadors group is made up of young women who have previously taken part in the programme and now contribute their insight and experience to help shape its continued development. Their role is to provide authentic feedback, inform decision-making, and ensure the programme reflects the needs and aspirations of the young people it serves. In turn, the Ambassadors gain leadership experience, confidence, and opportunities to develop their skills and influence positive change for their peers. This youth-led element strengthens the programme's relevance, impact, and long-term sustainability. During the summer, we arranged a team bonding day for our youth ambassadors, which included a trip to mini golf and food. It was an opportunity for the girls to catch up, chat about the recent work of the # NotJustForBoys programme and provide input into new projects in development. The Youth Ambassadors also volunteered at the Belfast and Crossmaglen Summer Schemes, supporting the # NotJustForBoys team and inspiring the girls on the summer scheme.

Throughout the year, the # NotJustForBoys teams hosted a range of events and site visits with our # NotJustForBoys Champions. This included bringing a group of girls to the Department for Communities Historic Environment Division's Conservation Works Team Depot in Moira, promoting heritage skills and insights into careers within the industry. Harland and Wolff hosted a site visit for 10 girls from Girls' Model School on our # NotJustForBoys programme who are studying GCSE construction. In partnership with GEDA, we hosted gender stereotype workshops at Wheatfield Primary School, working with 41 P6 and P7 girls and boys, and a workshop at Long Tower Primary School in Derry. In December 2024, we hosted a Girl's Into Construction Day in partnership with CITB. This event was held in our Newry workshop and brought together 36 girls from St Paul's and St Coleman's Schools to try out handtools, tiling, DIY, car mechanics and a gender stereotype session. The aim of the day was to educate and inspire girls on the vast array of career opportunities in construction, gaining insight to roles, pathways and support. In January, the # NotJustForBoys team gave a careers talk to 100 girls from Fort Hill Integrated College in Lisburn, discussing gender inequality, the gender pay gap, careers in construction and the overall challenges women face in 'non-traditional' roles. At this event, our female joiner and car mechanic tutors came along to inspire and encourage girls through sharing their own experiences in non-traditional career pathways.

The # NotJustForBoys team attended an Education Authority Youth Conference in Newcastle which had a particular focus on gender inequality and violence against women and girls. The team hosted a gender inequality workshop with 55 students, raising awareness of careers in construction and the gender bias in non-traditional roles. The team also attended a West Belfast Careers Fair in St Dominic's School to promote careers in construction and to offer support to the girls in their subject and career choices.

Throughout the year, the # NotJustForBoys team also supported a three girls into apprenticeships with our Champions, CTS, Greenview and CHC Group.

CBenAct Cross Border Project

Established in 2023 and lead by the Centre for Cross Border Studies, the CBenAct project brought together WOMEN'STEC and Creative Spark, Dundalk, to engage on a capacity building programme to strengthen the skills, knowledge and resilience of organisations working in partnership on a cross-border basis. It aimed to embed an approach to cross-border cooperation that sees it as central to organisations' work rather than as peripheral to their core missions. Five staff and two board members engaged in a series of workshops and residencies with Creative Spark to explore the skills necessary to deliver cross-border projects, the key principles to collaborating on a cross-

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border basis, identify shared issues and challenges facing border communities in which both organisations work and to identify solutions and actions that can help to build better communities along the border. Through the programme, WOMEN'STEC engaged with women from Lislea and Hilltown, two small communities just a few miles from the border, to engage in community dialogue and a cross border dialogue programme with women from Dundalk. The project used the strengths and skills of both organisations to provide skills in design and DIY to work on practical projects, empowering women with skills that they can use in their own homes and communities, whilst also boosting confidence and self-reliance, as well as confidence in speaking with other people and working together as a group. The groups came together and discussed challenges and issues facing women and families that are both shared and unique to both communities on each side of the border. The project came to a close in June 2024, with two showcase events hosted in Lisalea, County Down and Creative Spark, Dundalk. At the final celebration event for CBenAct, WOMEN'STEC and Creative Spark came together for a facilitated strategy session to explore the future of our partnership together. This identified a number of shared project ideas which, as a partnership, we aim to explore to develop over the coming years, when opportunities arise.

Women's Wellbeing Community Pharmacy Project

The women's wellbeing programme is offered to support women to improve their health literacy, to gain knowledge and awareness of health and wellbeing issues to make informed, healthier decisions in their lives. The programme works in partnership with our local community pharmacist, Crossin Chemists, and is delivered in a participant-led approach. This year, 15 women engaged on the programme and the key health and wellbeing topics explored with the pharmacist included, women's health, family health, mental health, impacts of social factors on health, role of the pharmacy, pharmacy services and other community services.

INCOME GENERATION ACTIVITIES

VCSE Collaboration and Sales Courses

As we have developed our capacity and resources through 2023 into 2024, including the purchase of our Van and our outreach equipment, we have been able to expand the delivery of public courses in a range of DIY and trades across Northern Ireland, generating income and importantly, continuing our goals to inspire women and girls to explore careers in sectors where women are underrepresented. We have developed a number of areas which enable us to bring in funds that support the activities of the organisation, whilst also importantly, bolster our relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders. This year, we targeted collaborative work with other VCSE organisations to reach our target audience and deliver programmes and services for women who may be part of other community organisations. Through this, we worked with organisations such as The Meadow Ladies Group at Bog Meadows, Clanmil Housing, Hazelwood Integrated College (mothers), Sentinus Ballyclare and Sentinus Rathmore, Bryson Charitable Group, Rathfern Community Centre, Cithra Carrickfergus, Newry LGBT women, Focus on Family Coleraine, Ballybot House in Newry and the Mid and East Antrim Labour Market Partnership. DIY courses were delivered across all these groups and the women were supported through WOMEN'STEC to access other programmes and services and further support.

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council: Multiply DIY Bootcamp

Following the successful delivery of a Women's DIY Programme in 2023 through a contract with Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, we bid for a contract to deliver a Multiply DIY Bootcamp. WOMEN'STEC were awarded the contract by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council to deliver two Multiply DIY bootcamps aimed at providing 20 participants with DIY and trade skills and increased confidence. The contract required the delivery of introductory trade skills sessions incorporating numeracy, followed by accredited training in a chosen trades' pathway, in accessible community venues. We delivered three cohorts (two as originally contracted, plus an additional cohort), in Martinstown and Carrickfergus. As an added bonus to the programme (and not required within the specification), we provided all three groups with the opportunity to attend a site visit to the new Ballymena NRC college during its construction, in partnership with our # NotJustForBoys Champion, Heron Bros. This provided participants with real world insights into construction sites, skills used on site, career insights demonstrating the vast array of employment roles involved in construction and engagement with project managers and site workers. 23 participants achieved both OCNNI Level 2 Introduction to Home DIY and OCNNI Level 1 Award in Understanding Length, Weight and Capacity. Participants also benefited from hands-on practice using professional tools and materials, with 23 receiving their own drill on completion, supporting independent use of their new skills at home. Feedback from learners highlighted the value of increased employer interaction and post-programme support.

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NotJustForBoys Champions Initiative

Our Champions initiative entered its third year, with 33 private sector businesses proudly named as # NotJustForBoys Champions, supporting our mission and providing us with unrestricted income, with an increase of 43% from the previous year. More importantly, the Champions have been a major driver for us in developing our programmes and operations and supporting more women to explore careers in industries where women are underrepresented. This has included opportunities for many site visits, supporting the delivery of projects, donating materials and volunteer time, particularly from female role models. During 2024-2025, approximately 64% of our total income involved partnership or collaborative working, with both Champions and other VCSE partners. This year, key highlights of our engagement in partnership working with our Champions included:

- Dulux Decorator Centre provided sponsorship of 2 x women's painting and decorating courses at WOMENS'TEC. This involved site visits to their local decorating centre in Newtownabbey, staff volunteer time to provide knowledge and insights into paint and painting tools and donation of paint for the participants to paint and decorate one of our training rooms.
- WOMENS'TEC featured an interview with our Champion, CFM, to share the message of their female apprentice Caoimhe, who won Apprenticeship of the Year in 2024.
- NI Water hosted a coffee morning and quiz for their staff in support of raising funds for WOMENS'TEC during International Women's Day
- We wrote an article for Specify Magazine, Northern Ireland's No.1 Construction Magazine, detailing our # NotJustForBoys Champions initiative and our programmes and ways in which we can deliver social value outcomes for public procurement construction contracts
- Heron Bros hosted a site visit to the Ballymena NRC Campus development for a group of women from our DIY courses being delivered in the Mid and East Antrim region.
- We were featured for an article in The Irish News to showcase our # NotJustForBoys programme and our partnerships with the industry in increasing awareness of careers in construction
- Our CEO spoke on a panel about social value in construction at the Chartered Institute of Building's annual members event in February. We also held a stall at this event to showcase our work and opportunities for collaborations with the industry through our Champions programme.
- We hosted two site visits to the Department for Communities' Historic Environment Division to provide participants with hands-on experience and traditional heritage techniques. This sparked interest for some participants who were interested in exploring further careers in heritage.
- We held another 3 Girls into Construction Days in partnership with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) aimed at showcasing careers in construction and targeted at schoolgirls.
- The Braidwater Group hosted 3 x site visits to their largest ever construction site on the Monagh Bypass where they are delivering over 650 new homes, including 550 social housing units and new community facilities. Students from our Tiling class gained an insight into the extensive planning and logistics involved in a project of this scale, exploring houses at various stages of construction and gaining an understanding of the various roles involved in delivering a project of this size. A tiler working on the project provided a demonstration and walked through a typical week on-site. Students from our gardening class also attended a site visit, where they had a similar experience and then planted trees for three of the new social housing units. Finally, staff were provided with a site visit to gain a better understanding of the process and stages of delivering such a large construction project.
- Our CEO attended the Construction Employers' Federation annual awards dinner, providing opportunities to network with many construction companies and identify opportunities for our programmes and students.
- We hosted 3 summer schemes for the # NotJustForBoys programme in summer of 2024 – in Belfast, Kilkeel and Crossmaglen. The Belfast summer scheme was sponsored by our Champion, Harland & Wolff and targeted for girls aged between 10-15 yrs old learning about the process of boat building. They learned skills in joinery construction to build two different types of boats that were then launched on the River Lagan as part of the River Lagan Boat Parade hosted by WaterWorks. Our Champion, Dulux Decorator Centre also provided donation of paint for the girls to decorate the boats they built. JP Corry provided donations of materials for all the summer schemes.
- Our Champion, Combined Facilities Management (CFM) sponsored a DIY programme for women in the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough as part of their social value delivery plan.
- Our Champion, Flynn (Construction) installed new windows at the back of our building. They match funded (sponsored) the remaining difference in costs from Belfast City Council's Local Investment Fund grant we received to upgrade the windows.

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- JP Corry continues to support our programmes and courses throughout the year, sponsoring the #NotJustForBoys Homework Club, providing site visits to their building merchant yards, donated materials and role models.
- In partnerships with our Champion, the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) hosted a taster day for P7 pupils at WOMEN'STEC, providing hands on experiences at various trades.

It is evident to see the non-monetary value of the partnerships and collaborations over the past 12 months, particularly in enhancing the opportunities and experiences for the participants on our programmes. This work contributes significantly to our mission of enabling women and girls to access careers in industries where they are under-represented and our vision of an inclusive, sustainable society and economy where women and girls can reach their full potential and thrive.

We also held our first annual 'Breakfast of Champions' event at WOMEN'STEC in June 2024. This event brought together all our Champions, individual supporters and other relevant stakeholders to come together and celebrate the support provided by Champions to our programmes and organisation, hear success stories and networking opportunities between Champions. This was very successful, and we found an appetite from Champions to network between one another, creating more opportunities for collaborative work together and sharing of ideas and knowledge of how to support WOMEN'STEC.

Other key notable activities and achievements

This year, we continued to house and manage the work of the Northern Ireland Women's Budget group, be represented on the Greater North Belfast Women's Forum, advised on the Rank Foundation's RankNet Leaders Action Group, sit on the DfE Skills Strategy sub-committee on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, sit on the Urban Villages Reference Group, represented on NICVA's Economic Inactivity Group, and work alongside our partner organisations on the Women's Regional Consortium funded through the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme.

We were also contracted as community partners in a Local Policy Innovation Partnership (LPIP), EPIC Futures, led by Ulster University. The aim of this is to create evidence-based solutions to fair and inclusive employment across Northern Ireland. As a community partner, we will be supporting research into economic inactivity amongst women, through focus groups and consultation with our participants. We will also be supporting research into an effective evaluation toolkit for the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.

In January 2025, we submitted a bid to the UK Government funded 'Shared Prosperity Fund' to continue delivering our Building Futures programme in collaboration with Bolster Community and Women in Business. This was successful, securing transition year funding for 2024-2025 for this project to support economically inactive women into employment in the Newry, Mourne and Down, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, Belfast and Derry regions.

In January 2025, we formally established a consortium to submit a bid to the Department for the Economy's Apprenticeship Inclusion Challenge Fund to deliver a programme of mentoring, support and awareness for girls in construction-related apprenticeships. Having been successful with this bid, WOMEN'STEC are the lead partner, bringing together CIOB, North West Regional College, South Eastern Regional College, Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Construction Futures. Through this, CIOB have committed to working with us to develop a mentoring programme for girls in apprenticeships that will involve their members training to become mentors.

We are delighted that our CEO was recognised for her work in building and developing relationships by being nominated and successfully awarded the Leading Collaborations & Partnerships Award at the CO3 Annual Leadership Awards 2025 for WOMEN'STEC's work in collaborating across and within sectors.

We have increased our exposure in various media, which has increased our reach throughout Northern Ireland, having been featured in the following publications: Specify (Northern Ireland's No.1 Construction magazine), Mineral Product Association's 2024-2025 Journal, The Irish News, BBC Radio Ulster (Sunday Sequence x 2), Newry.ie, Drogheda Life, NI Builder.

In May 2024, we hosted a visit a delegate from Philadelphia, led by Bill Strickland, the founder and chair of the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild and Bidwell Training Centre in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, who work with disadvantaged and at-risk youth through involvement in the arts and providing job training for adults. The purpose of the visit was to exchange knowledge and gain insights into community and youth development and to explore potential opportunities for future investment in Northern Ireland.

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In July 2024, we expanded our senior leadership team and welcomed a new role, Head of Operations, to oversee our growing programmes and services team. We also welcomed a new finance officer to support our Head of Corporate Services and the wider finance function of the organisation. have implemented several structural, management and operational recommendations from our 2024 organisational review, including reviewing and updating policies and procedures and the appointment of an external HR company.

Achievements and performance

Between April 2024 to March 2025, 436 women engaged with our Connect 4 Women (WTEC's delivery), Building Futures, women's wellbeing and VCSE collaborative programmes and 728 girls engaged with the # NotJustForBoys Programme, an increase of 56% from 2023/2024. A further 104 women completed our general public sales courses. In total, we engaged 1,268 women and girls across all our programmes and services in 2024-2025. We delivered 23 DIY courses, 15 Level 2 accredited trade courses, 8 employability skills courses, 5 health, wellbeing and personal development courses and 141 participants received an accreditation. We support 32 women into employment, 113 women to actively seek employment, 71 into further training / education and 23 in volunteering or another positive outcome. 96% of participants reported increased confidence after completing programmes, 87% reported improved wellbeing, 93% reported new skills and knowledge gained and 95% reported a positive move towards their goals.

We have provided feedback and case studies below to provide the human stories behind the outcome data above.

• Confidence

"It has allowed me to get out of the house and meet a great bunch of girls, get my confidence back and improve my mental health, and just get my sparkle back. I was worried that nobody would employ someone with Rheumatoid Arthritis because of potential illness and taking time off but the mock interviews have been unreal and the interviewer has really helped to break this barrier for me".

• Mental Health

"The programme inspired me to believe in myself and helped me enable myself envision doing business and working for myself. As a student of the Personal Finance and the Make Money for Yourself classes on the Building Futures Programme, I have recently set up an online digital business and made my first £300! Additionally, my involvement in the Make It, Sell It initiative and the sense of community and well-being I have found through the Horticulture class have significantly improved my confidence and sense of purpose. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunities provided, including the financial support (bursary through Building Futures) that has allowed me to start my Level 4 in Art, Design and Media Practice at Belfast Metropolitan College. The skills I've gained, especially from the OCN in Computer Administration, have been invaluable in managing my business, and I am thrilled with my progress so far. Thank you so much for the wonderful help and support. Your encouragement has truly made a difference in my journey."

• Vocational

"The sense of achievement is great. Also, as women bringing these skills home and showing our children what can be achieved is really important. Everyone was so positive and encouraging on the Programme. We now have skills we can take forwards. The Make it course had a clear pathway with clear aims and objectives. The Money Management course was really useful for looking into any sort of self-employment – such as budgeting and profit margins. Also, the mix of the courses was very successful.

• Employment

"If I hadn't done the employability course I would still be unemployed. Rachel took us through the interview process and it was amazing. Having someone help you complete a CV and prepare for interview was a lifesaver. Also, having that sense of accountability is key. The practical information on benefits has also been very useful."

THE WOMENS TEC (TRAINING, ENTERPRISE & CHILDCARE CENTRE)

DIRECTORS' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

Achievements and performance

- **Skills**

"I always wanted to do it. From I was a little girl I wanted to be a carpenter. But in my day women didn't do that. You were a home maker and looked after babies. It's always been there but I just need the confidence."

- **Loneliness and Social Isolation**

"The Programme has made me more confident in terms of job seeking in the future. I am less lonely and made new mum friends. I have also learned to improve myself in many different ways such as how to approach job interviews and what being a classroom assistant involves."

Feedback from Belfast Jobs and Benefits Office

"The biggest barriers we see are mental health conditions, not just for the women themselves but often their children, many of whom were Covid babies. Many mothers do not want to upset their child's routine by taking on work. Some use their child as an excuse because there is the fear of doing something new and a lack of confidence. Many women themselves present with anxiety, problems with communicating and mental health conditions. These issues mean that they are not work ready but the BFP brings them much closer to being work ready than they previously were. For these individuals, the inclusion of support in becoming self-employed has been extremely beneficial, as they often see traditional jobs as being unfeasible for them. A lot of women we see do not have familial support. The BFP increases their support network by connecting them with other like-minded women. As an organisation we always try to understand and provide holistic support – financial, social and mental health. The BFP is an important element of this support. It really does transform the claimants' lives. I am amazed at the difference a short course with WOMEN'STEC has had on the women involved."

THE WOMENS TEC (TRAINING, ENTERPRISE & CHILDCARE CENTRE)

DIRECTORS' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

Financial review

The Financial Statements deal with all the income and expenditure of the charitable company, as well as its financial position at the year end. The results for the year and the financial position were considered satisfactory by the trustees.

At 31 March 2025, total charity funds were £499,641 (2024: £537,522), of which £373,400 were unrestricted (2024: £356,720). Overall, reserves decreased by £37,881.

All monies received supported key objectives of the charitable company, funding charitable activity costs, both direct and support.

a. Going concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charitable company has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the accounting policies.

b. Reserves Policy

The trustees' policy is to retain a level of free reserves which matches the needs of the organisation both at the current time and in the foreseeable future. The charitable company has developed a plan to establish and maintain an agreed level of free reserves of £184k to cover 3 months' salary and core running costs, a redundancy pay reserve and a reserve for final audit fees, leasing charges and other contingencies as at 31 March 2024.

Whilst actual unrestricted reserves at 31 March 2024 were £ (2023: £235,439), £ was designated for future capital spend and £ was tied up in fixed assets, leaving free reserves of £ (2023: £202,066).

The charitable company will continue to monitor compliance with this policy on a regular basis and the Board will review the appropriateness of the policy annually.

c. Principal funding

The principal funding of the organisation derived from an anonymous Private Foundation, The National Lottery Community Fund, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, UK Shared Prosperity Fund/Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, Construction Industry Training Board NI, BBC Children in Need, The Executive Office (Urban Villages), The Rank Foundation, The Ireland Funds, Centre for Cross Border Studies/IFI, Community Development & Health Network, The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Ulster University/Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Department of Foreign Affairs, Dormant Accounts Fund NI, Garfield Weston, LFT Charitable Trust,

THE WOMENS TEC (TRAINING, ENTERPRISE & CHILDCARE CENTRE)

DIRECTORS' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

Plans for future periods

After another successful year of growth and development, guided by our strategic plan, key activities for growth and development during 2025-2026 include:

- Establishing our presence in the North West region. We identified a new workshop space in Creggan, Derry City which will open in September 2025, bringing our programmes and services to women and girls across the region, representing our commitment and intention to expand our service delivery to the north west region in line with our strategic priorities for 2024-2027.
- Establish and deliver the new # NotJustForBoys Pathways Plus programme, leading a consortium of 6 partners across education, VCSE and construction and funded through the Department for the Economy's Apprenticeship Inclusion Challenge Fund.
- Continue to deliver the 'Building Futures' programme, in partnership with Bolster Community and Women in Business NI, focusing on expanding the areas of delivery and achieving employability outcomes for women on the programme.
- Following our governance review last year, we will be recruiting new board members with various skills and knowledge to strengthen our board and governance structures.
- As we continue to grow and expand our programmes and services across Northern Ireland, we will be recruiting for a new role, Training and Resources Manager, to oversee the development and management of our course curriculum, tutor management, training equipment and resources, our 3 workshops and our outreach kits and van. This is aimed at improving the quality of our service provision and will involve collaboration with the industry to develop further pathways from our courses into training, education and employment within sectors where women are under-represented.
- We will also be supporting staff to increase our knowledge of Green Skills and the Green Economy. We aim to do this through our Champions Network, working with Champions such as Phoenix Energy, NIE, Translink and others who are leading the way in sustainability. This is to enable us to be better informed of future skills for work to be able to support our participants into employment in growth sectors, where women are under-represented.
- Work with our partner, Longford Women's Link, to increase the capacity of our staff team to support women and girls using our services affected by violence against women and girls, through training and resources. We will also be developing a programme to increase awareness and provide support to women using our services.
- Begin the process of exploring options and viability of building a new home for WOMEN'STEC
- Continue to grow the # NotJustForBoys Champions network to increase support from relevant industries.

THE WOMENS TEC (TRAINING, ENTERPRISE & CHILDCARE CENTRE)

DIRECTORS' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

Structure, governance and management

a. Constitution

The company is registered as a charitable company limited by guarantee and was set up by a Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The charitable company is constituted under a Memorandum and Articles of Association and is a registered charity, number NIC100185.

The principal object of the charitable company is to provide advancement of education and the prevention and relief of poverty and unemployment amongst people and in particular women and young girls primarily in Northern Ireland and also elsewhere.

b. Public Benefit Statement

The trustees have complied with the duty to have due regard to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's statutory guidance on the public benefit requirement issued under the Charities Act (NI) 2008.

The direct benefits accruing from our purposes as noted with the Charities Commission in Northern Ireland include:

- Students gain qualifications and practical skills;
- Students experience heightened self-esteem and confidence enabling them to move forward into further training and education or employment;
- Students enhance their employability, increasing their opportunities to move into further training and education or employment; and
- Students are better equipped to move into paid employment, therefore increasing their economic security.

There have been no changes in the objectives since the last annual report.

c. Governance and methods of appointment or election of trustees

The management of the charitable company is the responsibility of the trustees who are elected and co-opted under the terms of the Articles of Association.

Day to day management was delegated to the Chief Executive Officer, Lynn Carvill, whose salary is set by the Board.

Other employees are paid in accordance with the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services Payscale.

d. Risk management

The trustees have a risk management policy which comprises:

- An annual review of the principal risks and uncertainties that the charity face.
- A risk register covering 7 key categories of risk is maintained and updated annually and more frequently where risks are known to be volatile and an accompanying risk mitigation plan which outlines existing controls procedures and proposed controls procedures improvements and actions
- Key roles and responsibilities of the board and staff in risk governance

Financial risks remain the most significant, reflecting pressures familiar across the sector. These include limited investment in long-term income sustainability, rising operational costs, and the need for stronger cashflow management. Controls are in place, including improved forecasting and ongoing income development work, but the overall financial environment continues to present challenges that require close monitoring.

Governance and HR risks focus on maintaining strong oversight, compliance, and workforce stability. These include ensuring that policies and procedures remain up to date, retaining skilled staff, and maintaining the organisational knowledge needed to deliver specialist programmes. Mitigations include regular policy reviews, enhanced internal communication, and investment in leadership and staff development. Although residual risk levels vary, these areas remain stable due to consistent oversight from senior management and the Board.

THE WOMENS TEC (TRAINING, ENTERPRISE & CHILDCARE CENTRE)

DIRECTORS' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

Operational risks span facilities, equipment, IT systems, and service delivery. The organisation continues to work within an ageing building and faces ongoing risks related to wear, maintenance, accessibility, and the reliability of IT systems. Service-delivery risks relate to programme quality, data management, and the ability to meet demand with available resources. Improvements to digital systems, stronger data controls, and clearer operational procedures provide meaningful mitigation. However, infrastructure limitations and increasing programme demand keep these risks firmly on the agenda for the coming year, particularly as the organisation explores future premises options and ongoing investment in systems and equipment.

The directors who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Maria Bradley
Siobhan Brown
Sylvia Gordon
Nuala Griffiths
Andrea Morrow
Michael Potter
Nicola McCleery

(Resigned 22 November 2024)

Recruitment and appointment of trustees

Statement of directors' responsibilities

The directors, who also act as trustees for the charitable activities of #cd2, are responsible for preparing the Directors' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the directors are required to:

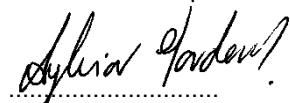
- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The directors are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

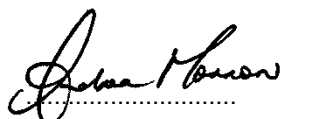
Auditor

In accordance with the company's articles, a resolution proposing that HM Chartered Accountants be reappointed as auditor of the company will be put at a General Meeting.

The directors' report was approved by the Board of Directors.



Sylvia Gordon



Andrea Morrow

Date: 14/11/2025