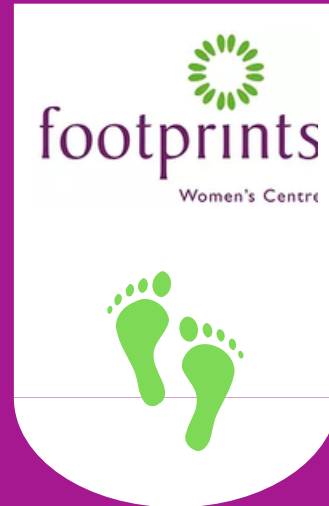


# FOOTPRINTS WOMEN'S CENTRE A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH



Established in 1991, Footprints Women's Centre supports the delivery of positive change in the lives of women and children in the Colin area of Belfast, from an inclusive and friendly, award winning facility. The Centre is the largest community employer in the area, with a team of 24, the majority of which are local women. They operate a social enterprise approach to their work, opening a Daycare facility in 1997, café/deli, social supermarket and the newly launched community kitchen.

Providing online, telephone and a walk in, drop in service for local women and children in the area, the Centre offers accredited and non accredited training programmes, crisis intervention and emergency aid to women with a referral service. They also offer support and development advice along with a range of health and well being initiatives, workshops and therapies to support women and local families.

Sustainable living is a core focus, developing innovative projects including the installation of solar panels, generating thirty per cent of the centre's electricity, kitchen gardens, social supermarket and community kitchen. They gained a Green Flag award in 2022 and 2023 for outstanding environmental management of their outdoor gardens and spaces.

Over the past 30 years, the requirements and needs of the community served by the Footprints Women's Centre have grown immensely. With this, the Centre has had to constantly adapt, develop and grow the services they provide to the Colin community.

The Urban Villages Initiative is one of the headline actions within the NI Executive's Together: Building a United Community Strategy. It is designed to improve good relations outcomes and develop thriving places where there has been a history of deprivation and community tension.

Since 2016, Urban Villages have been supporting the Footprints Women's Centre as part of a collaborative capacity building programme in the Colin area, and also with over £100K in capital funding provided. The funding has enabled the modernisation and development of a social supermarket, the creation of a new office and meeting space for use in a range of purposes including private counselling.

Through the Urban Villages initiative, Business in the Community, The Responsible Business Network were introduced to the five Urban Village areas, aligning the corporate social responsibility focus of the Business in the Community network with the Initiative.



From the beginning, the 'Holiday Hunger' theme struck a chord with Business in the Community members and following a successful pilot, Urban Villages provided funding of £35k alongside donations from several leading NI companies and members of their network. This funding supported almost 70 events and projects, with over 20,000 meals provided along with activities that bring young people and the wider community together to improve wellbeing, learn new skills and promote good relations.

For most businesses, it makes commercial sense to get involved in community based corporate social responsibility initiatives related to their business. PwC was first introduced to Footprints Women's Centre during a celebration of the Urban Village and Business in the Community's jointly funded Holiday Hunger scheme. Having been completely blown away by their work and the positive impact they were having on the Colin community, PwC's Chief Purpose Officer, Benny Miskelly, left the meeting knowing PwC could support their community work in numerous ways and through a partnership approach.

The Footprints Women's Centre quickly became one of PwC's charity partners and over the following 4 years, the partnership flourished along with an understanding of the challenges and opportunities.



**The activities where PwC have supported the Footprints Women's Centre since 2019 include:**

- Strategic Review Strategic review of the organisation's operations and helped them develop a strategy for the next 5 years.
- Centre Modernization As a result of PwC moving to a new office at Merchant Square, they were able to modernise the facilities at the Centre by replacing all the existing office furniture with that of the old PwC office at the Waterfront Plaza.
- Commercial Kitchen PwC donated their commercial kitchen from Waterfront Plaza ovens, fridges, freezers, hot plates, mixers and even the kitchen sink. The kitchen was installed in the annex building at the Centre and has enabled a range of ambitious plans, including the development of a social enterprise, providing an NVQ course in catering and, providing meals for the People's Kitchen Meals on Wheels service.
- IT support This year the Centre received funding for a person to manage their digital media, website etc. She was a single parent who put herself through university, but she needed support as this was her first ever job. As she had to design and build a new website, PwC provided her with technical support and a personal mentor, to collaborate with her throughout the year.
- Painting & Gardening PwC have provided teams of people who have painted and gardened around the site. PwC staff have harvested apples, supported community bakes and shared the food with the community.
- Family Support PwC staff have donated items food, nappies, clothes, toys and other items to the baby store at the Centre. The store supplies these to young mothers.
- Coaching and Training Provided by PwC to senior staff.
- Recognition PwC organised for the Queen's Commonwealth Games Baton to visit the Centre during its recent tour of Northern Ireland.



**Footprints Women's Centre  
Community Kitchen**





**Isobel Loughran, CEO, Footprints Women's Centre**

"The backing from Benny and the team at PwC Belfast has been invaluable. Their ongoing support and dedication to our work has been immense, supporting us to plan for the future, developing our networks, digital infrastructure, and ensuring that our Strategic Framework is robust.

"One of the most effective aspects of the Centre and PwC's partnership is the ability to interact with other community organisations and build networks that we would otherwise not have achieved.

"Substantial support has been provided; this is making a real difference. An example of this is the donated commercial kitchen which has enabled the development of our food service and social enterprise, the next phase of which will include the purchase of a food truck next year to build upon and develop the success of the food service.

"The commitment and support of PwC over the past four years has put Footprints Women's Centre on a whole new footing, we can now serve and support more people in our community while also ensuring we're on a firm footing for the future needs of Colin and beyond."

**Benny Miskelly, Chief Purpose Officer, PwC**

"Investing in community activities, or our "Purpose" for PwC guides everything we do as a firm. Having a really clear Purpose for PwC goes beyond products or services and instead describes what impact or change we can make in the broader economic and societal context. It delivers for the community and for the business.

"We have really seen the benefits to our business of all these partnership projects. These projects offer a unique way for staff to develop their skills, which they can bring back into the business. It also offers our staff opportunities and situations that they otherwise would not experience, makes them a more rounded employee, one who is more engaged. Increasingly, employees are choosing to be part of organisations that make a difference, and it is critical we deliver on our Purpose agenda and remain an employer of choice. As well as recruitment, it helps to keep staff, as people want to work for a company which shares their moral values.

"I first discovered Footprints Women's Centre during the launch of Business in the Community's Holiday Hunger scheme and was completely blown away by the work they were doing and the impact they were having in the Colin areas of Belfast. I left the event knowing they were going to become one of PwC's charity partners. They have been ever since, that was 4 years ago. Over that period, our partnership has continued to go from strength to strength and the relationship continues to develop."



*Isobel Loughran, CEO, Footprints Women's Centre and Benny Miskelly, Chief Purpose Officer, PwC at the opening of the Waterfront Community Kitchen launched in conjunction with PwC who have a social cooperate partnership with the Footprints Women's Centre.*

Want to find out more about Footprints Women's Centre, please visit [www.footprintswomenscentre.org](http://www.footprintswomenscentre.org)



Want to find out more about the work of The Executive Office, Urban Villages project, please visit [www.executiveoffice.ni.gov.uk/articles/urban-villages-initiative](http://www.executiveoffice.ni.gov.uk/articles/urban-villages-initiative)



Want to find out more about responsible businesses, please visit the Business in the Community website [www.bitcni.org.uk](http://www.bitcni.org.uk)



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