

A centre for all the family



St Brigid's Family and Community Centre Manager Anne Goodwin with Development Workers Carmel Connolly and Mags Drohan.

ST Brigid's Family and Community Centre offers a range of services and supports for families, individuals and the wider community in Waterford.

On a recent visit to St Brigid's impressive facility on the Lower Yellow Road, I discovered a centre which is a hive of activity and a hub for the local community.

The centre's mission is to support families in communities to enable them to identify their family and local needs, to develop holistic responses, and to enhance participation in wider community life.

Rather than basing itself on a charity model, St Brigid's instead focuses on an empowerment model and emphasises the importance of 'people power'.

A range of programmes are on offer including Women's Health Programmes; Parenting and Grandparenting Programmes; Parent and Toddler Groups; Community Safety Workshops, to name a few.

St Brigid's Family and Community Centre was established in 1984 by the Sisters of Mercy. Over the years, the centre has evolved into the impressive facility it is today.

In 2000, the centre established a Family Resource Centre to further develop its community development role in Waterford's inner city.

A perfect example of the important role the centre plays within community life is the coffee morning group which meets on Fridays. "This developed as a result of a tragic incident that happened in the community," explained Development Worker Mags Drohan.

“There was quite a lot of fear in the community as a result of that incident and we provided the space here in the centre for the older generation to come and meet.

It’s an informal setting and a social outlet for meeting neighbours and friends.” Along with counselling services, there are also a number of support groups that regularly meet in the centre such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

All of the work at the centre falls under one or more of the following categories, as outlined by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, which states that children and families should be: healthy, both physically, mentally and emotionally; supported in active learning; safe from accidental and intentional harm/secure in the immediate and wider physical environment; economically secure; part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community/ included and participating in society.