**The Vine Centre** | Background Information

**History**

The Vine Centre was established in 1970, on the initiative of members of several church congregations on the lower part of the Crumlin Road.

Initially, this was in response to a specific problem; due to violence in the area, many local people had been compelled to leave their homes at short notice, and needed help with practical issues such as securing alternative accommodation and moving their possessions.

However, over subsequent years the Centre evolved to address a much wider range of issues linked to the physical, economic and social regeneration of the area.

For most of its existence, the Centre operated from converted houses in the area, most notably at 227 Crumlin Road. However, in 2003 a new purpose built Centre was officially opened, which has significantly enhanced the facilities available to us, and allowed us to expand the range of programmes, activities and services we could offer to local people, most notably in terms of locally accessible, affordable childcare.

The Centre operates within a Christian ethos, which sees the work we do as a practical demonstration of God’s unconditional love for the people of this area; this is reflected in the non-judgemental basis on which we approach those who use the building, viewing all those who access our programmes, activities and services as of equal value, and worthy of the best efforts of staff and volunteers at all times.

**Current Activities**

At present, the Centre offers the following programmes, activities and services:

* A **generalist advice service**, which provides local people with advice, information and advocacy on a range of issues including benefit entitlement, consumer issues, housing and employment rights;
* **Specialist advice** on money & debt and tax & tax credit issues;
* **Childcare**, through:
1. **Bulrush Day Nursery**, which is registered for up to 39 children aged 0-4;
2. **Vine Afterschools Club**, which provides school aged childcare for children aged 4-12, which is registered for up to 48 children each day;
* **Education & Employability Support**, which includes courses for adults wishing to improve their skills, and a newly opened **Work Club** which provides practical support to local people who are looking for employment;
* A **Pastoral Support programme**, which seeks to support those experiencing isolation or crisis through a befriending service which seeks to support people through home visitation, and signposting to other appropriate services;
* A weekly **Senior Citizens Lunch Club**, which provides older people with an opportunity to have a meal in the company of others, with a programme of activity after lunch;
* A weekly **Homework Club** for primary school children;
* A **Healthy Living Group**, which supports those attending to make more informed choices about their physical and mental wellbeing;
* **Little Sparks**, a weekly Mother & Toddler Group.
* The Centre is also the current lead partner for the **Upper North Belfast Family Support Hub**, which aims to connect families with children under 18 years old to appropriate early intervention support services.