# The Link

The Link came into being in January 1997, and has developed significantly since that time. From two full time members of staff and 25 volunteers initially, the organisation now employs seven full time and five part time members of staff and has in excess of 50 volunteers working in a number of different areas. The Link originated from a group of concerned local people who formed a Management Committee to take the project forward. It has charitable status and, in October 2002, became a Company Limited by Guarantee.

**Vision Statement**

It is our vision to see vibrant connected families and communities where individuals have opportunities to reach their full potential

# Mission Statement

Motivated by our Christian faith, it is our mission to love, serve, connect and encourage individuals, families and communities.

# Values

As a Christian community organisation we value:

**Faith:** generating hope through the practical expression of Christian faith

**Family:** being a community which cares for others

**Heart:** reaching out with compassion and love

**People:** developing positive relationships, which encourage and empower individuals to reach their full potential

**Acceptance:** welcoming all people and embracing diversity

**Understanding:** listening and communicating without judgment

We realise our vision, mission and values through our work with individuals, families, communities and churches within the North Down and Ards area.

# The Link – Current Activities

Since 1998, The Link has developed work with some of the most marginalized members of the local community. Work includes:

* Youth. (Project 23)The vibrant youth project focuses on building relationships, reactive support and structured youth programmes which are developed in consultation with the young people. Programmes include residentials, group sessions and one to one work. The staff have recently developed a connection with North Down Training and Employment Agency which includes a lunch drop in programme on Monday and Tuesday.
* Link Addiction Support Services (MARC Project). Supporting those with addiction problems to reduce self harm, promote sobriety and maintain independence. The unrestricted access of the drop-in allows for conversation, showers, clean clothes and hot food. Home support helps with cleaning, other aspects of independent living and hospital and prison visiting. Programmes of daily activities encourage sobriety and rehabilitation.
* Senior Citizens lunch club, Run by Senior Citizen volunteers for other Senior Citizens, a healthy lunch and good craic is provided on Monday each week and a Drop In programme each Thursday morning. Lifts are also available. The Lunch Club programme is coordinated by May Hamilton and the seniors activities on Mondays and Thursdays are coordinated by Irene Donaldson.
* Tots Time @ The Link provides children and their carers with an easily accessed community venue where children can learn through educationally stimulating play. By focusing on individual needs, children of all abilities can learn to share and care for each other while their carers find friendship and support. Karin McMahon coordinates the volunteers and programme for TotsTime
* English Classes are taught by a volunteer team for speakers of other languages. There are three different levels of difficulty and the coordinator Elizabeth Black also supports those undergoing Life in the UK examinations. There are a variety of cultures represented here and at any given time there could be up to 18 different nationalities. These classes are free and do not involve any exams. Some people attend because of the flexibility it offers and for others it is a supplementary to their course in SERC. A children’s programme runs at the same time to allow parents to attend when they have no one to mind the children.
* Community relations/community development.has changed considerably over recent years. Through The Link we strive to bring about a situation where agencies, community groups, churches and individuals are working together for the positive development of the community of Newtownards.

# Community Development

Community development principles form the cornerstone of all The Link’s work, services and facilities and underpin our determination to ensure that involvement in the organisation is a positive and enjoyable experience for all. Our approach strives to be enabling, empowering, supportive and outward-looking.

**Fair employment/Equal opportunities.**

As a Christian organisation, believing in the value of all human beings, The Link recognises that discrimination exists within our society and we are committed to equality and addressing that discrimination.

The Link is committed to fair employment and equal opportunities for all its employees, volunteers and users, regardless of race, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, disability, dependency, religious belief or political opinion.