



EQUALITY & FAIR PAY

- Katie Barr on why we need more men & better pay in early years childcare.

IRELAND'S UN AWARD

- for community work during Covid



CHANGE MAKERS IN DONEGAL

- Why are we flying in crab from Indonesia?



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

LISTEN TO THE GRASSROOTS

• 121 projects can see the future



Brian Harvey on the visionary work of Family Resource Centres and why we need to tune in

• ABOVE: Supporters of Tacú Family Resource Centre in Co. Mayo.



Dining out in Dublin

UKRAINE: €10.5m more for community work with refugees



Funding was "sorely required"

• ABOVE: The real-life stories of people experiencing poverty in Ireland today are being told - thanks to Dublin City Community Co-op, with support through SICAP.



• ALSO INSIDE:

- New €2m Empowering Communities Programme launches in 14 locations
- Social Enterprise news
- New volunteer centres
- Horace returns!!!





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Social enterprise news

- See page 11



• Commenting after the SEED social enterprise event in Dublin, Southside Partnership CEO Sharon Commins said, "There was a live energy in the room and a strong sense of goodwill."

MEET US ONLINE



INDEPENDENT

'Changing Ireland' is an independent, community-based, not-for-profit publication.

ABOUT US

'Changing Ireland' engages in original journalism to highlight the impact of local and community development and social inclusion work in Ireland. We report on action on the ground and provide a space for reflection on what serves people and communities best.

The magazine was established in 2001 and is based in Moyross, Limerick. We value social justice, equality and fair play, and we aim to give people who are rarely heard a voice.

We produce journalism to highlight valuable work funded or supported by Government departments and agencies. We provide a platform for those on the ground in communities.

Our readers include workers, activists and volunteers nationwide, civil and public servants and many more involved in social inclusion and community development.

'Changing Ireland' is core-funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

See page 4 for information about the team behind 'Changing Ireland'.

SUPPORT

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**An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail**
Department of Rural and
Community Development

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readership at:**

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Grassroots knows best



Thanks to Brian Harvey who has written an opinion piece about Family Resource Centres (FRCs) having a nose for issues before they become widely known of. The danger is, as he points out, issues seen on

the ground are not recognised at policy level in enough time.

His account of the history of FRCs makes for a trip back in time. They were not just lucky to survive: The FRCs set up their national forum when all was going well and that umbrella body was then of help when cuts came.

In the meantime, Community Development Projects (CDPs) were "aligned" with Local Development Companies and the number of CDPs declined, a little over a decade ago, from 180 to around 50 projects. Nowadays, the role of CDPs is again recognised and more and more projects are being funded through new pilot programmes - a welcome development.

Also to be welcomed are the additional funds for supporting Ukrainian refugees through Local Development Companies,

through the Ireland for Ukraine Fund and through Volunteer Centres.

Ukrainian refugees, who may be here for a long time to come, will benefit from this support. For Local Development Companies, the extra funding through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is a relief as they were spending funds earmarked for other marginalised groups. That has now ended.

The extra funding was announced before the UN chose SICAP for an award. If the extra funding showed the Government truly values the programme, the UN award shows it is correct. Congratulations to all involved, especially to the community workers on the ground delivering the supports.

* * * * *

Housing is of course one of the biggest challenges facing refugees. They come here not knowing of our housing "disaster", as President Higgins called it recently.

In the short term, much more could be done to tap the generosity of Irish people offering space in their homes to refugees. It seems the Red Cross, which receives substantial funding from the Irish State, is trying too hard - at the expense of refugees - to adhere to every

minute regulation.

Child welfare is critical, but this is an emergency and on other matters they should be less fussy. The fear is that a zealous approach to adhering to regulations may stifle public generosity. Meanwhile, it's worth remembering that people can offer a room through one or other of the Ukrainian voluntary support groups (you'll find them on Facebook). Nothing's perfect, but I know two households who have successfully taken this path.

* * * * *

Development education is taking place informally through people reaching out to refugees. In Inishowen, Co. Donegal, they have formalised the delivery of development education for the past decade and readers should check out Katie Barr's 'ChangeMakers' report (pages 18-21). The work, supported by Inishowen Development Partnership, has been highly praised by, among others, Irish Aid.

Allen Meagher

FILE A REPORT FOR US!

If you believe in Community Development and enjoy writing, why not file a report for us about your community project and what makes it unique. 300-400 words is plenty (and a photo if possible). Certain criteria apply. Your first point of contact should be the editor.



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'Changing Ireland' thanks everyone involved in the production of Issue 77.

Front Cover:

MAIN PICTURE: As people emerged from lockdowns, friends of Tacú FRC in Co. Mayo met for an afternoon of music, food and friendship. BELOW LEFT: Photo from the book 'No Child Shall Suffer'. BELOW RIGHT: The Ukrainian flag being raised at County Hall, Swords, on March 14th.

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this magazine are those of the author concerned. They do not, by any means, necessarily reflect the views of the editor, the editorial team, the voluntary management board of Changing Ireland Community Media CLG, or its core-funder the Department of Rural & Community Development.



Ireland wins UN award for its community work

- 10 winners after 350 apply from 58 countries



• Ireland's SICAP programme was among the winners of a United Nations award for 'Institutional resilience and innovative responses to the Covid-19 pandemic'. Above - Mr Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, makes the announcement in New York.

Ireland has won a United Nations award for its response at community level to the Covid pandemic. The UN received over 350 entries from 58 countries for 10 awards - with Ireland winning one for its Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP). The programme is supported by the Department of Community and Rural Development and the news was announced on June 22nd.

Other award winners came from The Philippines, Poland, Thailand, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, India, Panama, Canada and Ukraine.

"Great recognition from the UN no less for SICAP," said South Tipperary Development Company,

congratulating all involved. Similar sentiments were expressed by others involved in delivering the programme.

"This award, a first for this Department, is testament to the strength of the programme and the hard work and commitment of our DRCD staff, Pobal, Local Government, Local Development Companies and programme beneficiaries," said Minister of State for Community Development, Joe O'Brien.

"I am very proud that the SICAP programme has been recognised for this award," he said.

SICAP's budget increased by 10% to €43m at the start of this year and a

further €5m was announced in June to support its work with refugees.

The programme supports communities and individuals experiencing disadvantage and has 13 target groups: children and families; women, young people (aged 15-24), emerging needs groups, lone parents, low income workers/households, new communities, people living in Disadvantaged Communities, people with disabilities, Roma, people disengaged from the labour market, unemployed people, and Travellers.

For more details about the UN award visit: <https://www.un.org/en/desa/un-public-service-awards-recognize-10-innovations-help-world-recover-better-covid-19>

More refuges, more money

- Domestic violence supports increased

The Government's new €363m five-year, zero tolerance strategy to tackle domestic and gender-based violence will see the number of refuge spaces increase from 141 to 280 and ensure that no county is without safe places for women to flee. Justice minister Helen McEntee made the announcement in late June.



• Anne Clarke, manager, ODVSS.

Our Spring edition included an interview with Anne Clarke, manager of Offaly Domestic Violence Support Service which welcomed the news.

Read Ray Lucey's Spring 2022 interview with Ms. Clarke online at: <https://www.changingireland.ie>

WEST'S LGBT+ CHECKLIST

The Western Region Family Resource Centre LGBTQ+ Network has produced a checklist which it says can be used by FRCs and others as a tool to help identify any gaps and confirm that your project has the necessary elements in place.

W: <https://www.familyresourcementalhealth.ie/lgbtq-frc-check-list>



NEW STRATEGY TO BUILD ON LIBRARIES AS COMMUNITY HUBS

A public consultation on the new Public Library Strategy is underway until 5pm on July 9th.

The new strategy will be the successor to 'Our Public Libraries 2022 - Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities' which has seen much progress in the public library service in Ireland over the past 5 years.

Before the pandemic, libraries started to develop eLibrary services and were repurposed as community hubs.

The new strategy will shape the development of public libraries for the next 5 years.

The new strategy will be equally ambitious in continuing to grow the library service, said Minister of Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphries, launching the appeal for public input on June 8th.



€10.5M EXTRA for community & voluntary efforts supporting Ukrainians

- €5million goes to local development companies through SICAP
- A further €5 million goes to the 'Ireland for Ukraine Fund'
- Plus €500k for volunteer resource centres

€10.5 million in fresh funding to assist the community response to support people arriving from Ukraine was jointly announced in June by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys, and Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development, Joe O'Brien.

In a press statement, the Department said, "This funding will strengthen the capacity of those already working across the community and voluntary sector to improve the experience and quality of life of people arriving from Ukraine."

"As new arrivals begin to settle into community life in Ireland, this funding will help ensure that we continue to look after those most in need."



• The announcement was made by Minister Heather Humphreys (above) and Minister of State Joe O'Brien.

Minister Humphreys added: "Since the start of this terrible war, our communities have played a central role in helping people arriving from Ukraine settle in to their new life in Ireland."

The additional €10.5 million is "to continue to support community efforts".

"The Community and Voluntary Sector, which my Department has responsibility for, has not been found wanting in assisting families arriving here," she said. "I am confident that this additional funding will help ensure the integration of the people arriving from Ukraine, as well as assisting both rural and urban communities in continuing their work".

€5 million will be provided to

"This additional funding will help ensure the integration of the people arriving from Ukraine, as well as assisting both rural and urban communities in continuing their work".



• A moment to cherish as Ukrainians in Donegal watch as the final result of the Eurovision Song Contest is announced in Gaith Dobhair.

the Local Development Companies through the SICAP Programme.

Another €5 million goes to Community Foundation Ireland which administers the 'Ireland for Ukraine Fund'.

Finally, €500,000 will be used to support volunteer centres which, the Department said, "have been dealing with a huge demand for services since the start of the war in Ukraine."

SICAP WORKERS GOING ABOVE & BEYOND

Minister O'Brien added: "Over the past few months, I have seen first-hand the welcome and support being provided across the country to the people arriving from Ukraine. This funding will make a significant

difference to these efforts to deliver vital supports and services and continue to assist in the integration of the Ukrainian people into our communities.

"The funding to the Community Foundation of Ireland will ensure that frontline NGOs and agencies are resourced to deal with the crisis while the additional funds for Volunteer Centres will further support the immense work of volunteers and volunteer managers in working with other stakeholders to support arriving Ukrainians and local communities.

"I am delighted to secure another increase for the vitally important SICAP programme and its workers who go above and beyond every day on the ground in communities across Ireland. They have been instrumental in helping people arriving from



• Wexford Local Development is carrying out local consultations with Ukrainian refugees to empower the community to be active participants in their lives in Co Wexford. Above - attendees at the 2nd such consultation.

Ukraine adapt and integrate - this additional funding will support and enhance that vital work," he said.

IRELAND FOR UKRAINE FUND

As the Department explained in its statement, the Community Foundation for Ireland was established in 2000 as a philanthropic and grant-making organisation with impact and social change at its core. It is an independent registered charity that:

- Provides a long-term source of support for community and voluntary organisations and charities in Ireland and overseas.
- It also acts as a catalyst to meet changing needs in the community.

A coalition of television companies and other media outlets established the charity fundraising campaign called 'Ireland for Ukraine' as a collective effort to raise funds to support the humanitarian response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Community Foundation for Ireland is the charity partner for the fundraising appeal and a stand-alone, ring-fenced fund - the Ireland for Ukraine Fund - has been set up at The Community Foundation for Ireland.

Funds for elsewhere will no longer be diverted

Ballyhoura Development welcomed the government's decision to allocate an additional €5m to the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme.

The programme, delivered through Local Development Companies, will assist in the ongoing provision of community development and social inclusion supports to Ukrainians who have arrived in Ireland over recent months.

The company said in a statement that, "This funding will strengthen the capacity of those already working across the community and voluntary sector to improve the experience and quality of life of people arriving

from Ukraine."

"As new arrivals begin to settle into community life in Ireland, the funding will help ensure that we continue to look after those most in need," it added.

Pádraig Fitzgerald, chair of Ballyhoura Development, agreed with Minister Humphreys that communities across Ireland have played "a central role" in helping Ukrainian refugees settle into their new life here.

He said the funding would ensure that funds meant for elsewhere are no longer diverted:

"Local Development Companies already provide a huge range of

supports to migrant communities and the demand has obviously accelerated since March.

"Ballyhoura Development welcomes the additional resources to the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme which will help provide an even more effective response and ensure that funds allocated for pre-existing priorities do not need diversion," he said.



BALLYHOURA
DEVELOPMENT CLG

Additional resources were sorely required

Asked for his reaction to news of an extra €5m being allocated to communities through SICAP this year, Steve Dolan, CEO of Galway Rural Development said:

"The Galway public and the local businesses we've contacted asking for targeted aid have been enormously generous, and indeed we've also already found many Ukrainians work, mainly in retail. But while the extent to which Co. Galway has responded has been remarkable, additional resources were sorely required.

"This €5m, albeit spread across the county, will be most welcome as we face into the Summer. No decision has been made by us on how the

additional monies will be targeted, however obvious gaps exist and the demand is only growing."

ON THE €2M...

Regarding the new Empowering Communities Programme (*see story on page 15*) he said:

"We're obviously very pleased that Ballinasloe has been included in the 'Empowering Communities Programme'. We had been unfortunate in not securing funding last year from our friends in Rethink Ireland so this is a timely and necessary intervention. We will be aiming to enhance the Citizens' voices in Ballinasloe and allow others to have their voice heard for

the first time. We hope to identify areas of overlap, and certainly gaps in services that we can then try to close collectively".



• CEO of GRD Steve Dolan, Minister Joe O'Brien, and Supervisor Sean Larkin of GRD.

Clear recognition of SICAP's impact and local dev't companies flexibility

Regarding an extra €5m being allocated through SICAP this year, Pat Leogue, CEO of County Kildare LEADER Partnership said:

"The €5 million additional support for SICAP is a clear recognition nationally of the impact that the programme has in working with disadvantaged communities. It is also recognition of the flexibility that Local Development Companies have in responding to emergency situations like the Ukrainian refugee crisis or indeed Covid-19."

"Our experience in working with programme refugees in the past has demonstrated that integration support is needed through links workers with the language skills to

assist refugees to settle in Ireland. This is the approach we plan to take which will augment the core SICAP work of supporting individuals and communities across County Kildare," he said.

ON THE €2M...

Regarding the announcement of funding under the new Empowering Communities Programme (*see story on page 15*) he welcomed the fact that part of the funding is going to County Kildare.

"We hope that the engagement with other areas and with DRCD in implementing this Programme will focus efforts to engage local communities without the constraints

of specific programme guidelines. We hope it will also allow us to draw some lessons together nationally from the 14 areas which might inform future funding for social inclusion work," he said.



• Pat Leogue, General Manager of Kildare LEADER Partnership.

Govt agrees on set of Values & Principles for working with the Community and Voluntary Sector

There were a series of welcome funding announcements in the first week in June by the Department of Rural and Community Development. One of the more interesting non-funding announcements that same week was news that the Government had agreed on "a set of values and principles to underpin work with the Community and Voluntary Sector". The Department has published details online. (Bitly link: <https://bit.ly/3N9yGuE>)

So what are those values and principles?

Principle 1: Respect

Commit to respect for the diversity of knowledge, skills, views and lived experience being brought to a process by all stakeholders. In addition, bodies will make every effort to maximise the potential this diversity brings while managing any conflict or disagreements which may arise in a positive and inclusive way.

Principle 2: Subsidiarity

Recognise and facilitate the ability of communities, whether communities of interest or geographic communities, to influence and, where possible, take decisions and actions, promoting power sharing and the exercise of power as close to communities as possible.

Principle 3: Harmonisation

Ensure consistency with existing strategies and implement agreed objectives and actions relevant to local and community development. Support and facilitate approaches promoting harmonisation and common standards of good practice in local development and community development programmes, policies and processes throughout the country.

Principle 4: Value for Money

Promote and facilitate value for money approaches underpinned by a collaborative, partnership and whole-of-government ethos that prioritises societal value and community need.

Principle 5: Implementation

Make every effort to leverage the structures already in place locally and nationally seeking to maximise the potential of these structures.

Principle 6: Collaboration

Work in collaboration with relevant stakeholder and communities to support sustainable approaches to policy and programme development and implementation.

Speaking in Dublin on June 1st, Minister of State Joe O'Brien said, "The values and principles will be used by central and local government as a basis for their interactions with the community and voluntary sector in pursuit of the best outcomes for all."

MAKE OR BREAK FOR SOCIAL FARMING

'Changing Ireland' attended a conference on social farming on June 1st and heard of hopes to develop a dedicated multi-annual social farming fund to support participation nationally. Social farming has grown nationally thanks to local development companies. It is beneficial in particular for people with disabilities and in recovery from mental ill health and demand is growing fast. But can we become like Denmark? Here are the eight take-away points the organisers* pin hopes on.

- It's an ordinary activity with extraordinary outcomes
- Denmark supports 30,000 annually on 1,200 social farms
- By comparison we support just a few hundred participants

1 An attendance of over 150 people representing the breadth of stakeholders is a testament to the growing support and demand for Social Farming as an ordinary activity with extraordinary outcomes.

2 Evidence shared from recent research shows the multiple benefits arising from social farming, not just to participants and their families but also to farm households, rural communities and service providers. It is a WIN – WIN – WIN situation with outcomes that cannot be matched by conventional services.

3 The sheer variety of activities naturally available, the family environment, community base and the reality of what happens on the social farm are all of tremendous value. They are impossible to replicate in an institutional or clinical setting.

4 In the Netherlands, where Social Farming is embedded within mainstream health and social care provision and funding, at least 30,000 people every year avail of Social Farming supports on 1,200 farms. This delivers jobs and economic activity in rural communities and diversifies the rural economy on an ongoing basis.

Translated to the Irish context, this would mean at least 10,000 people per annum could avail of this inclusive community-based opportunity if it were more easily available.

5 Conference attendees in their workshop sessions were unanimous in their frustration at the slow progress of Social



• Joanne O'Riordan, guest speaker - centre - with others attending the Social Farming conference.

Farming in Ireland.

They asked: Why is Social Farming not achieving its full growth potential? The conference acknowledged that without political will and real commitment to funding and accessibility to placements for people with disabilities and mental ill health, that Social Farming is in danger of stalling.

It was agreed that to grow Social Farming to its potential there is a need for a collective effort by advocacy groups, service providers, farming representatives, local development companies, and other stakeholders. This is needed to shift the inertia that has consistently frustrated the full development of Social Farming in Ireland.

6 The growing demand from participants, their advocates and from front-line health and social care workers now needs to be matched by mainstream funding from within core health and social care budgets.

7 There are two potential game-changers in bringing Social Farming to the next level:

- (a) the delivery of a dedicated multi-annual, cross-departmental fund for Social Farming placements, and
- (b) the implementation of individualised/personalised

budgets for people with disabilities. The conference called for political action and progress on both these issues.

8 The potential return on investment for the thousands of people who could experience amazing – sometimes life-changing – outcomes from Social farming Support is substantial, multi-faceted, cost effective and ultimately good value for money.

* The conference was organised by Social Farming Ireland which is funded by the Dept. of Rural and Community Development. Guest speakers included Joanne O'Riordan, Dr. Aisling Moroney, Brian Smyth, Helen Hunt, Theresa Peacock along with speakers from Northern Ireland and Denmark.

KIND CATS: National Volunteering Strategy is well underway

- says O'Brien as he opens new centre in Kilkenny city



• Attendees at the official opening on June 17th: Martin Brennan (KVC board member), Zse Varga (Volunteer Ireland), David Fitzgerald (Mayor), Fidelis Doherty (outgoing Cathaoirleach), Cllr Maria Dollard, John McGuinness TD, Minister Malcolm Noonan, Helen Rothwell (KVC board member), Minister Joe O'Brien, Paula Harte, Salena Grace (KVC mgr.), Margaret Whelan (KVC chair), Theresa Delahaunty and John Paul Phelan TD.

BY SALENA GRACE

Salena Grace is the manager of Kilkenny Volunteer Centre. She writes:

Since commencing our work last year, Kilkenny Volunteer Centre (KVC) has supported over 500 volunteers who have put themselves forward to volunteer. It helped direct the volunteers toward meaningful roles in their communities. Now, KVC has its own dedicated centre – officially opened on June 17th by Joe O'Brien, Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development.

The KVC provides a matching service for individuals who want to volunteer, linking them to organisations seeking volunteers. It provides consultancy, training, Garda vetting services, and other supports. Over the past 12 months, the centre has supported over 150 organisations to recruit new volunteers and instill best practice in their volunteer programmes.

The opening of KVC follows a decision by the Department of Rural and Community Development to fund the provision of a full-scale volunteer centre in the county.

Opening the new centre, Minister Joe O'Brien said, "Kilkenny has a vibrant community sector and the opening of the volunteer centre can provide support to the already established energetic community and provide opportunities for those who wish to contribute their skills and their time to volunteer in Kilkenny. This Volunteer Centre will ensure that both the volunteer and the volunteer involving organisations are supported."

As manager of the centre, I see volunteers at the very heart of what makes Kilkenny special. From our vibrant sporting traditions, our health services, our tourism industry, our community and youth services, our environmental initiatives to our world-renowned arts and culture scene, the positive impact that volunteers make is felt across all aspects of our communities.

We want our new centre to serve as a community hub for volunteering in Kilkenny where volunteers and community groups alike will be welcome to come and avail of our supports.

Minister O'Brien also noted the

importance of Volunteer Centres for delivering the vision of the National Volunteering Strategy which he said was well underway.

He said, "The Strategy's vision of 'a society where volunteering is promoted, valued, facilitated and supported so that people can contribute to developing and maintaining vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities' is well reflected in the vision for Kilkenny's Volunteer Centre."

Kilkenny has a vibrant community sector with over 424 community groups registered with the Public Participation Network.

KVC is an independent registered charity and the Board is made up of six representatives from the local community, representing key stakeholders and covering the geographic divisions of the county.

W: www.volunteerkilkenny.ie

W: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3cba6-national-volunteering-strategy/>

REVIEW OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORKS PUBLISHED

An 81-page report on Public Participation Networks (PPNs) has been published by the Department of Rural and Community Development. The report examines existing structures and challenges, and makes recommendations.

There are PPNs in every local authority area and they connect community groups with each other and with local authorities.

Over 650 people contributed to the review in one way or another.

The report - compiled independently by a company called Mazars - summarises PPNs' strengths, stating: "No one knows their communities better than the PPNs on the ground."

When people were asked in a survey to rate their PPN's level of independence, the results ranged from 100% in some areas to 38% in others. The report makes recommendations on how to address challenges such as these so that PPNs can continue to develop and grow.

The review follows a 2020 commitment in the Programme for Government to examine PPN structures "to ensure that they are fit for purpose for climate action and community development."

It is available for download: Search for "PPN Structural Review Report" on <https://www.gov.ie/>

OPENING OF WATERFORD VOLUNTEER CENTRE

On May 9th, the official opening of Waterford Volunteer Centre took place and for the occasion they baked this amazing Volunteer Centre cake!



They are based on the Cork Road and have a great website:

<https://volunteerwaterford.ie/>

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/VolunteerWaterford/>

INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR NATIONAL PROJECTS

- Nearly €21m over 3 years for 81 organisations / 231 applied

Funding of €20.8m over the coming three years for 81 national community and voluntary organisations was announced on June 3rd.

The funding comes under a new round of the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO) and will support those groups until mid-2025.

The scheme supports national organisations that provide services and supports focusing on social exclusion, addressing poverty or promoting equality.

At €20.8m over the lifetime of the scheme, the funding is €2m more than the €18.8m awarded under the 2019-2022 Scheme.

The number of organisations funded increased to 81 from 74 under the previous scheme. A total of 231 groups submitted applications for funding with a total ask of €46.5 million.

SSNO is administered by Pobal on behalf of the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). The scheme helps fund the core costs of national organisations in the community and voluntary sector. It helps to fund core staff positions as well as

administration and operational costs.

Minister of State at the DRCD, Joe O'Brien, said he was "impressed" by the quality of applications received and was keen to make funding available to as many organisations, across as many categories, as possible.

Minister O'Brien said, "Critically, this multi-annual funding is over a three year period to allow organisations to plan for a more sustainable timeframe."

"This essential Government investment will benefit organisations who operate in the health, disability, homelessness, children and young persons, older persons, equality and social inclusion sectors, amongst others.

"I am confident that the many people who benefit from the support and services delivered by these groups will see the value of this investment."

Last October, the Minister had promised "a new and improved iteration of SSNO".

Applications were invited from community and voluntary organisations that operate at a national level with evidence of a nationwide membership.

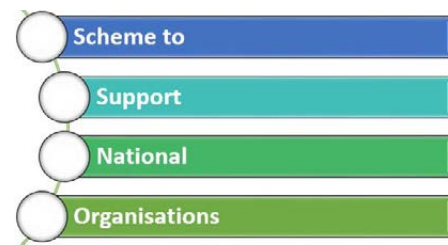
The allocation of funding was largely based

on evidence of need and value for money.

The Department in a statement said this was to ensure that the funds were allocated to the organisations where they are most needed and to make the maximum contribution to the community and voluntary sector.

The Minister said: "This was a highly competitive process with over 230 applications received from organisations who provide vital services nationally."

Applications are independently appraised by Pobal to ensure transparency, fairness and due process. The criteria for appraisal was across the following five areas: national remit, governance, value for money, need and meeting the programme requirements.



QUALIFYING GROUPS - FUNDING OVER 3 YEARS

- Active Retirement Network €272,130
- Age Action €268,874
- Aiseiri Cahir €273,000
- Akina Dada Wa Africa €273,000
- Anam Cara Parental And Sibling Bereavement Support €273,000
- Arthritis Ireland €272,886
- Asthma Society of Ireland €273,000
- Autism Spectrum Information Advice & Meeting Point €273,000
- Barnardos €273,000
- Belong to Youth Services €272,474
- Boardmatch Ireland €191,555
- Brainwave – The Irish Epilepsy Association €254,428
- Breaking Through €272,979
- Care Alliance Ireland €273,000
- Carmichael Centre For Voluntary Groups €273,000
- Center For Independent Living €222,440
- Cherish €273,000
- Children's Rights Alliance €272,770
- Chronic Pain Ireland €131,567
- Community Creations €260,653
- Community Workers €273,000
- Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency €245,700
- Disability Federation of Ireland €216,554
- Down Syndrome Ireland €273,000
- Dyslexia Association of Ireland €266,638
- European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland €272,999
- European Network Against Racism (ENAR) Ireland €273,000
- Family Carers Ireland €232,960
- Focus Ireland €256,812
- Foodcloud €273,000
- Foróige €240,055
- Free Legal Advice Centres €273,000
- Grow in Ireland €273,000
- Health Research Charities Ireland €271,914
- Immigrant Council of Ireland €272,999
- I.N.O.U. €273,000
- I.W.A. €272,604
- Inclusion Ireland €269,158
- Irish Assoc. for Palliative Care €260,918
- Irish Council for Social Housing €138,908
- Irish Deaf Society €273,000
- Irish Foster Care Assoc. €272,873
- Irish Men's Sheds Assoc. €243,158
- Irish Penal Reform Trust €264,119
- Irish Red Cross Society €237,510
- Irish Refugee Council €268,298
- Irish Rural Link €272,345
- Irish Senior Citizens National Parliament €271,657
- Irish Stammering Assoc. €271,375
- Irish Sudden Infant Death Assoc. €273,000
- Irish Environmental Conservation Organisation For Youth -UNESCO Clubs - €273,000
- Irish Hospice Foundation €240,177
- Irish Local Development Network €272,275
- MS Society of Ireland €273,000
- LGBT Support and Advocacy Network €269,287
- M.O.V.E. €272,913
- Mental Health Reform €272,828
- Mercy Law Resource Centre €176,085
- Migrant Information Centre €273,000
- Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre €243,985
- National Association For Spina Bifida And Hydrocephalus Ireland €189,698
- National Women's Council €272,995
- National Youth Council €246,339
- Neurological Alliance €272,978
- New Communities Partnership €270,066
- Parents Plus €272,833
- Rape Crisis Network €272,910
- Rotha (The Wheel) €272,303
- SAFE Ireland €273,000
- Sensational Kids €236,720
- Simon Communities of Ireland €227,375
- Social Analysis And Action For Justice Ireland €273,000
- Special Olympics Ireland €273,000
- Specialisterne Ireland €273,000
- Spiritan Asylum Services €267,005
- TASC €256,526
- Threshold €273,000
- Treoir €134,033
- Volunteering Ireland €211,358
- Women's Aid €273,000
- Young Social Innovators €272,268



HEADS UP ON GRANTS & NEW POLICY COMING



• **LEFT:** Dr Andrew Forde, Dept. of Rural & Community Dev't, and Helena O'Neill and Finn McGuirk from Southside Partnership DLR. **RIGHT:** Duncan Walker, Collaboration Ireland, and Chris Gordon, Irish Social Enterprise Network.

Additional supports for social enterprises including a bigger capital grants scheme are coming later in the year, according to Dr Andrew Forde, Head of the Social Enterprise Unit in the Department of Rural and Community Development.

He was quoted in a press statement issued on May 31st by organisers of a networking event held in Dundrum, Dublin.

He confirmed that consultations for a new national strategy for social enterprise will start shortly.

Questions were asked about the potential for future supports to include staff wages and Forde and host Chris Gordon (CEO, Irish Social Enterprise Network) encouraged people to make their voices

heard, saying, "Now is the time to have your say."

Forde spoke about the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of founders, managers and all involved in working with social enterprises. He acknowledged that the risk of burn out is very real as organisations work with reduced numbers of staff, and revised strategic plans while struggling to replace lost income.

"Networking and making contacts, is one way to support each other," he said, "as well as potentially leading to future collaborations."

The guest speakers also included Chris Gordon, Aislinn Barrett from Airfield Estate and Caroline Gardner, CEO of

Quality Matters and We Make Good.

The event was held at Airfield Estate, Dundrum, site of the only farm in urban Dublin and a social enterprise in its own right.

The gathering involved people running and supporting social enterprises in four places - north and south Dublin, Bray town and County Waterford. The reason for it being confined to four is that in 2021 the local development companies in those areas set up a consortium to support 'socent' (as it's called).

The name of the consortium - which has Department backing - is the Social Enterprise Expansion and Development (SEED) Regeneration Programme.

It is administered by the Department and the Irish Local Development Network and is funded through the Dormant Accounts Fund.

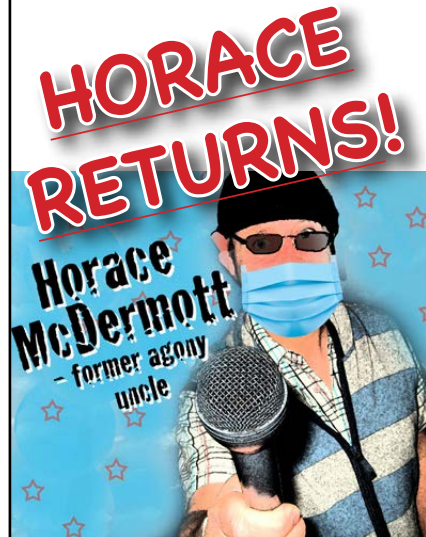
The programme provided over 50 social enterprise participants in the four areas with 275 hours of mentoring, 30 workshops, networking opportunities and promotional video opportunities.

Of national interest, later this year the first official census of social enterprises in the State will take place.

More info:

W: <https://southsidepartnership.ie/seed-project/>

W: <https://www.airfield.ie/>



THREE GOOD REASONS

Here are three reasons why refugees should think twice before coming to Ireland:

- Country music. (In Donegal, this is seen as a plus).
- Only 10 or so teams ever make it to the All-Ireland Championship Finals which means you will more than likely end up living in a loser county.
- Are you Ukrainian? If the answer is 'Yes', keep coming. If not, well we're not racist or anything like that, but...

Three reasons to value plastic more:

- It teaches fish to think before they swallow.
- Without it, future generations walking the beaches would be bored.
- Plastic doesn't grow on trees you know.

Give me three good reasons why I should take up a CE, Tús or Rural Social Scheme place?

As well as the camaraderie and learning new skills, you are joining the most generous people on earth. You get €22.50 extra on top of your social welfare payment, so after six months you'll have saved €585, enough to pay for a pack of biscuits at the rate inflation is going. Hey, who needs money!

Three perfect budget holidays:

- Ireland - bring your own tent.
- Wales - It's abroad. Can be visited on a day-trip.
- USA - pricey, but if you like going back in time it's fabulous. Only works for females.

Top three UK TV stations

The BBC, Sky and LWN: They showed up evil union boss Mick Lynch for who he really is - imagine wanting fair pay, fair play and equality. Tut-tut!

"Profit making, not profit taking"

"Profit making, not profit taking" was one of the popular themes discussed at the SocialiSE Summit held on 29th June, in Rialto, Dublin.

"Social enterprise is all about profit with purpose," the Irish Local Development Network's (ILDN) Donie McGrath told attendees.

More than 30,000 people work in over 1,400 social enterprises in the Republic and this event - organised by the ILDN - sought to raise awareness about social enterprise.

Mary Lawlor from Clann Credo outlined the challenges of sourcing funding for social enterprise and how to overcome them.

Donal Traynor of Community Finance Ireland urged social enterprises to focus on the marketplace - to be self funding as

well as availing of social finance or grants.

Stephen Ryan of Marketing in Cork showed how to tell stories through social media.

Among the case studies presented, Cathy Coote told of the work of award-winning Mheitheal Rothar in Galway and demonstrated how a social enterprise can bring about positive change in a community.

The event was recorded and can be viewed on the ILDN's Youtube channel. This is the direct link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHQnzSSuqJ4>

W: <https://ildn.ie/>



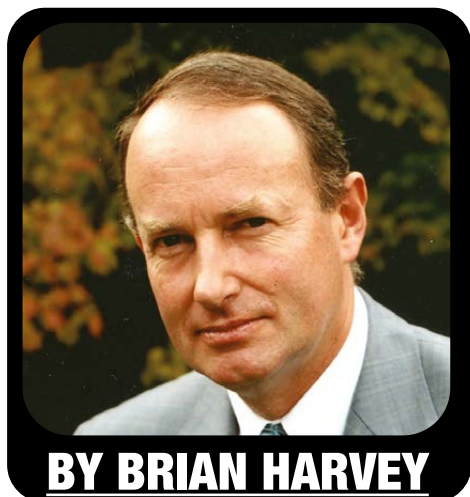
SocialiSE Summit22

• The ILDN's Donie McGrath at the SocialiSE Summit. Photo by Stephen Ryan of @MarketingInCork

CANARY IN THE MINE

We ignore early warning signals from Family Resource Centres at our peril

- No feedback loop to alert the state services responsible



BY BRIAN HARVEY

Who remembers 'Strengthening families for life' published in 1998? In 2022, the title sounds archaic, from an earlier age. It may or may not have been a 'must-read' for policy wonks in its day, but it gave us the idea of a national network of Family Resource Centres (FRCs). By 2008, there were 110.

They became the third part of the heroic triad of Community Development Projects (CDPs) and partnership companies that made Ireland the then European leader in local and community development. During the austerity period, most of the CDPs were abolished and the partnership companies exsanguinated*, now still 40% below their 2008 funding level.

The FRCs, though, survived and in a once-off recent expansion, they even added 11 more projects, so there are now 121. Even with this, their budget has long been below the €18.8m pre-austerity high water mark.

There was nothing new about Family Resource Centres. They went back to Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC) 'family centres' in Darndale, Wexford and Drogheda in the 1970s, joined by 'neighbourhood' and 'children's resource centres' in the 1980s, becoming a programme of ten in the Department of Social Welfare in 1994. FRCs had a long institutional trajectory, starting out as a service

* A WORD YOU DON'T HEAR EVERYDAY

Exsanguinate

verb

MEDICINE

To drain (a person, animal, or organ) of blood

- "carotid and jugular vessels were cut to exsanguinate the heart".

for families and their children at risk, building as community development projects and moving to the Family Support Agency and then Tusla, their current home.

They were located in disadvantaged areas. They had 2, 2.5 or even 3 staff, responsible to a board of management drawn from the locality, a budget of around €150,000 and operated typically out of an old building designed for something else.

They aimed to provide an accessible, open-door, privacy-respecting service at no or low cost: advice and support for parents and their children; information; education and training; personal and group development; counselling.

They worked with the Traveller community and more recently for the integration of the new communities and refugees. Their informal, low-tech appearance belied their delivery by skilled, professional staff and volunteers and their sophisticated services.

In France, these are called services de proximité, literally close-proximity services, designed to ensure that state and related services are readily accessible, especially in disadvantaged urban, peri-urban or rural areas where the delivery of the welfare state or national health service was most challenged, filling gaps of services and geography.

The particular difficulty in Ireland is our under-developed welfare state (go to Northern Ireland for a comparison); our lack of a national health service; and our weak rural transport services. These factors means that the role of FRCs is all the more important.

Most reports on the FRCs focus on the valuable work undertaken in individual centres - but they can also serve as a bellwether for emerging low-visibility, high impact social issues and concerns, a 'canary in the mine'. Two recent reports on the work of the FRCs shed light on changing social needs and how services responded to them. Some are highlighted here.

EMERGING ISSUES

- Food poverty
- Domestic violence
- Illiteracy & education
- Citizen information
- Psycho-social stress
- Waiting lists
- Social work
- Digital divide

1. FOOD

Traditionally, FRCs might provide meals-on-wheels and a low-cost café, for social as well as nutritional purposes. What was new in recent years was the early involvement of FRCs in Food Cloud, the European food programme and other food banks, a warning sign to alert us to now-widespread food poverty.

A sub-theme of food poverty is children, where FRCs have provided breakfast clubs for children so that they don't go to school hungry. Some provide cooking on budget courses, which are of immediate help - but do not fundamentally address the squeeze on food budgets.

2. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Women's groups have called for years for our domestic violence services to reach international standards in accessibility, density and provision of places. A feature of rural FRCs is women calling for help when there are services in the region - but too far away to walk to when there is no rural transport service.

The lack of local bus services is not costless: we do not know how many people do not get help because the nearest service is geographically unreachable.

3. STILL TABOO: ILLITERACY

One of the taboos about which we still do not talk - because it raises too many awkward questions about the under-performance of our educational system - is illiteracy. Quite a number of people coming to FRCs struggle with information, forms and reading texts.

Not only that, but FRCs ran an extensive set of compensatory education programmes, such as early years childcare, which would not be necessary if the education system was performing properly.

Their youth programmes help young people who struggle at school and do not get the help they needed there. Afterschools assist them with their homework where school support is insufficient.

CANARY IN THE MINE

On mental health:

"It would be more accurate and helpful to call it 'psycho-social stress', a consequence of people struggling with poverty and on low incomes."



• Apr 22 - As people emerged from lockdowns, friends of Tacú FRC in Co. Mayo met in the Lough Inn, Partry, for a great afternoon of music, food and friendship.

Photo: Tacú FRC on Facebook.

(Cont'd from previous page).

4. ACCESSING SERVICES

FRCs fill an important role in providing information on welfare, tax, services. This service is essential so that people may claim their entitlements, opportunities and avoid poverty, and doubly essential for people lacking confidence.

This role partly reflects the insufficient density of Citizen Information Centres (CICs) whose primary function is information provision. CICs, though, generally give people forms or tell them where to get them, but do not always help people to fill them in (this is a point of contention). FRCs do and they act as advocates for individuals in pressing their applications (e.g. housing) which in many cases is not for the faint-hearted.

5. PSYCHO-SOCIAL STRESS

There has been a big growth in demand for counselling services, reflecting the insufficient availability of free or low-cost voluntary services, waiting lists for statutory services and the unaffordability of private services.

This growth is often recorded as a 'mental health' issue, but granted that mental illness is evenly distributed in the population, the level of

presentation in FRCs is improbably high. It would be more accurate and helpful to call it 'psycho-social stress', a consequence of people struggling with poverty and on low incomes.

The high demand for such services is yet another reminder of the shortfall in mainstream and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in meeting needs. People come to the FRC instead.

6. WAITING LISTS

Notoriously long waiting lists for health services hardly need elaboration, but FRCs enable people in the communities in which they work to obtain services on-site which they would otherwise wait to reach for many years, if at all and for which they might have to travel far. Examples are speech and language therapy and play and art therapy for children facing, for example, bereavement, separation or behavioral issues, which cannot wait.

7. SOCIAL WORK

Some FRCs provide outreach services for older people, with FRC staff going out individually to people living far out in remote rural areas to address their personal situations, especially housing and medical care, in effect 'traditional, hands-on social work'.

In other countries, this work would all be carried out by a social work service provided by the health authorities or county councils, but not here.

"For all the heady talk of digital inclusion, FRCs have actually done the groundwork."

8. DIGITAL DIVIDE

For all the heady talk of the digital inclusion, FRCs have actually done the groundwork with computer training for both younger people (including coding) and older people, for whom computer skills are ever more necessary for interaction with state and private services (e.g.

banks, utilities), many of which are poorly designed and difficult to navigate.

Computer repair services have also been provided. This kind of local provision will become even more necessary as rural areas continue to be denuded of on-site state and private services. In some towns, the FRC is the only on-site, walk-in state-funded service left.

These under-the-radar issues are rarely documented, yet they provide an information base on social trends and realities. The problem here is that there is no system - what might be called a 'feedback loop' - to bring these awkward issues back to confront the state services concerned. Issues in such areas include rural transport, food poverty, domestic violence, illiteracy, educational underperformance, citizen information, waiting lists, social work, digital inclusion and rural desertification.

If you want to see changing Ireland change for the better, the FRCs can tell a lot - but it's time to listen to and act on these messages.

WRITER'S NOTE

This article also benefitted from earlier research in Ballyfermot FRC; Forward Steps FRC, Tullow, Co Carlow; Kilmovee FRC, Co Mayo; and Tacú, Ballinrobe, Co Mayo. My thanks to Clare Cashman of the National Forum for information and advice. This is a personal view.

FURTHER INFO

Websites: familyresource.ie & tusla.ie

Reports referenced:

* **National Forum of Family Resource Centres:** Our story - strengthening and empowering children, family and communities through the Family Resource Centre programme, 2020.

* **National Forum of Family Resource Centres:** Fostering brighter futures for individuals and families in local communities across Ireland, 2018.



• FRCs have insight: Pictured in 2020 - a reporter with Ireland AM in Ballinrobe, Co Mayo, to meet Mary Dempsey from Tacú Ballinrobe Family Resource Centre and Meals on Wheels and local GAA volunteer John Flannelly "to discuss the social issues affecting rural Ireland". Photo: @IrelandAMVMTV

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRES

121 centres & growing as demands increase



NATIONAL MAP

The Family Resource Centre National Forum (FRCNF) says the centrality of community development in informing the approaches, values and methods underpinning the work of FRCs is one of their defining features. Across the State there are over 121 FRCs in operation. All can be viewed via this map: <https://www.familyresource.ie/family-resource-centres-ireland.php>



EXAMPLE - BRAY, CO. WICKLOW

Bray Family Resource and Development Project says its role is "to support the community to be a collective voice for the development of appropriate responses to needs identified by the community".

Above (from their Facebook page) - boys presented with awards in June. They were patient, as was recounted by those presenting the certs:

"From the first day to certification, this was by far the longest Peer Leadership Training Programme we ever ran! It started pre-Covid and got put on hold throughout the various lockdowns. Most of these lads not only completed their Peer Leadership Training, but took part in our pilot RAGE (Resilience, Adventure, Growth, and Empathy) Programme last Summer, and gained their first soccer coaching badge earlier this year when they completed their FAI Player Development Programme Level 1 award."

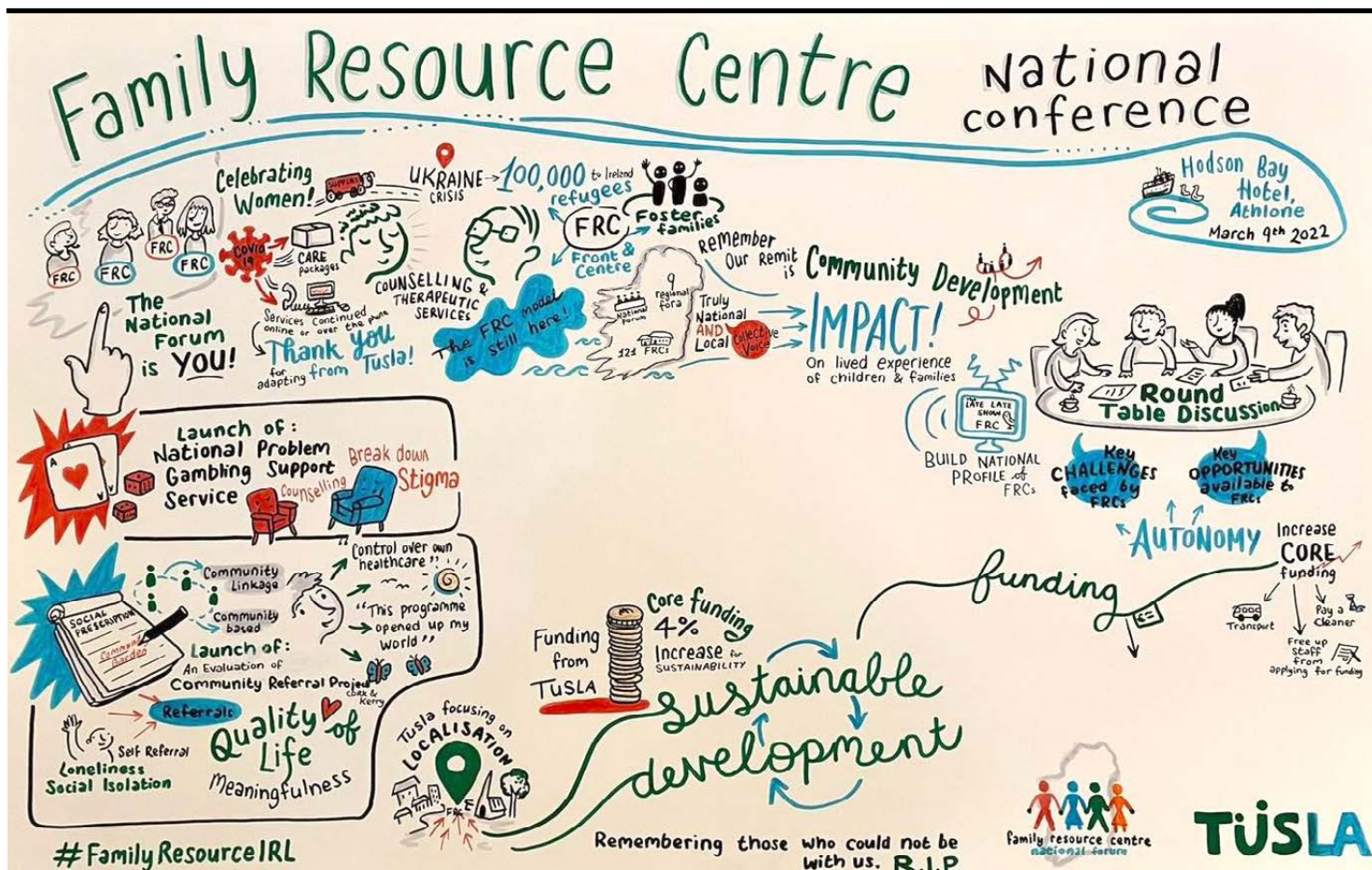


ERRIS CAMPAIGNS FOR FRC

In Erris, Co. Mayo, a campaign is underway to secure a Family Resource Centre. Campaigners describe Erris as "one of the most beautiful but isolated regions in the country, with many members of the community having to travel significant distances to access services that other areas may take for granted."

The photo above comes from a recent online meeting of campaigners with public representatives, including Dara Calleary, TD, Rose Conway-Walsh, TD and Alan Dillon, TD. They argue that an FRC could "act as a hub from which a range of family, community, mental health and well-being supports and services could be delivered, as well as supporting community development activity."

W: <https://www.facebook.com/frcforerris/>



• A graphic produced at the Family Resource Centres National Forum conference held in March when people gathered for the first time in two years.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

New €2m Empowering Communities Programme

- Community development approach is central to new initiative

Rowlagh Community Centre in Clondalkin, Dublin, hosted the launch on June 2nd of a new €2 million Empowering Communities Programme (ECP) that will specifically target area-based deprivation through a community development approach.

Rowlagh is one of 14 small geographical areas of socio-economic disadvantage that will be supported through the programme.

The Programme was launched partially in response to a Programme for Government commitment to expand the Dublin North Inner City model to other places.

The 14 small areas selected are within the following Local Authority areas: Dublin City (4 areas), South Dublin, Limerick City and County, Westmeath, Kildare, Longford, Galway County, Cork City, Mayo, Wexford and Donegal.

In each area, a community engagement worker will be recruited.

Minister Joe O'Brien said at the launch that the new workers "will be in a position of leadership in the community, developing and facilitating relationships between the local community and other relevant stakeholders at both local and national level."

"The Community Engagement Worker will be responsible for ensuring that the core work of the ECP is informed by and driven by the community."

"This programme will use a community development approach to address social exclusion and the impacts of poverty and disadvantage in very specific target areas.

Its aim is to empower local communities to tackle area-based disadvantage and social exclusion. True community development must always be about allowing communities to decide what's best for them."

"The people focused, capacity building and collaborative approach of the new Programme is consistent with the government's five year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector - 'Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities 2019-2024'."



• At the launch in Rowlagh Community Centre.



• Detached street workers Shauna Clarke, Alanna Sheridan and Paul Perth.



• At the launch - Brian Kehoe, Wexford, Helen Fitzgerald, Limerick, Minister Joe O'Brien, Niamh McTiernan, Dublin, Steve Dolan, Galway, Michael Bowe, Dublin, and Larry O'Neill, Dublin.



• Cllr. Guss O'Connell, Minister Joe O'Brien and Gino Kenny, TD.



• SDCP staff, board member and Minister Joe O'Brien.



• SDCP Community Development manager, Sheilann Monaghan, Mayor Peter Kavanagh, Minister Joe O'Brien

BOOK RECOMMENDATION

‘NO CHILD SHALL SUFFER’

- 14 real-life stories documenting 21st century poverty in Dublin's inner city

Innner-city poverty is laid bare in 14 real-life stories of children and their families living in Dublin's inner city, in a new book called 'No Child Shall Suffer'.

The stories are from people experiencing deep and persistent levels of poverty.

Seanie Lambe is a board member of Dublin City Community Co-op and chairperson of the Co-op's Advocacy-for-Change Subcommittee that oversaw the 80-page No Child Shall Suffer project. As he said, "This is not a research study, but a pen picture of the lived experiences of some of the most vulnerable in our society. All 14 stories reflect the real and contemporary lives of children and families in communities that we work with."

The Co-op hopes that these powerful stories "will increase public and political awareness of the need to intensify all our efforts to support children in vulnerable situations and to end child poverty and social exclusion".

Noel Wardick, the Co-op's CEO called for action.

"These children and their families, and many more like them, have no voice, they literally have no voice. Their stories must be told and their stories must be listened to. The telling of these and similar stories cannot stop until a time is reached when there are no such stories to be told. That is our collective challenge and that it is our collective obligation," he said.

The stories demonstrate how Covid-19 exacerbated child poverty. As Co-op's chairperson **Hugh Frazer** said - "One of the most pressing issues addressed by the Co-op and its 13 member organisations in our day-to-day work is the shocking and persistent levels of child and family poverty and social exclusion."

Frazer said the pandemic "underscored the deep-seated inequalities that persist in our society and has highlighted the importance of putting children at the heart of building a fairer and more inclusive and sustainable society as we emerge from the pandemic. In addition, we hope that these case studies will help to inform the development of Ireland's national action plan to implement the European Child Guarantee*."

The book was officially launched in December by **Roderic O'Gorman**, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and

"These children & their families, and many more like them, have no voice. They literally have no voice. Their stories must be told."

"The telling of these stories cannot stop until there are no such stories to be told. That is our collective challenge and obligation"

- Noel Wardick

Youth. He commended the Co-op on the publication: "It shines a light on the inequalities that sadly persist in our society, and in particular the impact that Covid-19 has had on vulnerable children. I would like to thank all those who have participated in creating this report, and the Government will endeavour to

respond to the issues raised in it".

The specific events described took place during 2019, 2020 and 2021.

* *Note: (a) Details of the European Child Guarantee are provided on page 73 of 'No Child Shall Suffer'. (b) The UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child is included in the appendix.*

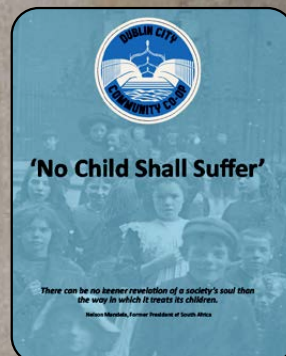


Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme

Dining out in Dublin



• A homeless mother feeding her children on a Dublin street in 2019.



• The quotation on the book's cover is from Nelson Mandela and reads: "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."

• ABOVE: A photo from 'No Child Shall Suffer' which tells stories from Dublin now, over 100 years after the first Dáil made a declaration that no child in Ireland would go hungry, be denied shelter, or lack the means to gain an education.

Too Many Struggles For One Child

- *Here is chapter 12 from the new book published by Dublin City Community Co-op. The names used are not the real names of the people and children in the story.*
- *The sentences marked in blue within the story are comments by crèche workers and one is by a father.*
- *The book is available in print and online (free) and is recommended reading for anyone studying youthwork, community development or working in these areas. It is just as relevant to politicians, policy makers, agencies & local authorities. Download link: <https://bit.ly/DCCP-NoChildSuffer>*

One community crèche that works with children in the community is alarmed at the number of children in their care who require additional support for autism spectrum disorders. In one year alone they had three very young children diagnosed as autistic. All three children are living in homeless accommodation and are from non-Irish families.

These children are from families that are already experiencing all the disadvantages of being homeless, being from Minority Ethnic Communities, and now they also have to contend with a disability diagnosis. They are somehow expected to manage all this with their limited resources. Many of the families also experience racism as a common occurrence.

The non-Irish children are very vulnerable.

**** SOL & ALI ****

Sol Ibrahim lives with his 5 year old son Ali in emergency accommodation. They are in one room and the quality of the accommodation is very poor. Ali attended the crèche from the age of two. The crèche became concerned about his development and interaction with other children and staff early on. Dad Sol was also worried. At times Ali can get very distressed and can spend hours crying and screaming with almost nothing able to console him.

Sol is parenting alone and is struggling but he loves his young son. Sol is doing his best to provide everything Ali needs within his very limited resources. Sol has no family in Ireland and Ali's mother is no longer with the family.

I don't know how they live. It can be overwhelming when a child is severely autistic. They are totally isolated.

Sol is often alone dealing with his Ali's distress, and he is aware that other residents where he lives are annoyed about the noise and don't understand why Ali cries so much. The crèche helped to get Ali assessed and helped Sol access supports but even that was very difficult. Because the family are living in emergency accommodation, they could not get support in their home. As a result, Ali was getting some of his professional support in a local public playground.

Was Ali and his Dad Sol not entitled to something better than that?

The crèche, along with other organisations involved with the family, paid for private speech and language and play therapy. Ali came on tremendously. Without these organisations they would not get the supports and would have no chance to come on and develop.

Ali is missing out on supports because he is



• The father in this story is parenting alone with very limited resources and he and his son live in emergency accommodation.

homeless. Dad Sol does not have other family around to help him, and even if he did, they could not come into the accommodation because it is against the rules. How many hurdles should one Dad and his young son have to face?

**** THE UMARS ****

The Umars are a family with three young children. Their second child, a 3 year old boy, Mobo, has been diagnosed as autistic. The Umar's are homeless and live in a homeless hub. The family have just had another baby, and this new baby child also has some health issues. Joy Umar, the children's mother, is depressed. Mum Joy is finding it very difficult to accept that Mobo has any difficulties and has now had a further blow upon learning that her very new baby may have a significant disability. Joy is very distressed about everything and is struggling to cope. Nassim, the children's father, explained:

Where they are from, in their culture to have a child who is not well in that way, they don't recognize them. They feel shame, as the culture where they come from can often shun families with children with those disabilities.

The Umars did not recognise Mobo's difficulties, nor could they pay for an assessment. The community crèche fund raised for money to get the assessment done after talking to Mobo's parents about their concerns.

After the assessment was completed and the family got a diagnosis there was another whole set of challenges to be faced to access the resources that they require to support Mobo.

Even if Mobo's family gets support, even if they get 20 hours tuition, they cannot take that tuition, unless it is done through our crèche or building, because they don't have the space in their hotel room, how would they do it? It's a minefield.

The crèche works with those children who have additional needs on a one-to-one basis using the Access and Inclusion Model (AIMS) model*. The AIMS model provides specific supports to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. AIMS provides additional funds to a service provider to hire additional staff who can do one to one work with the child.

This is scary stuff, in all the years I have never seen so much diagnosis. I haven't a clue why! It's all across and it's in different cultures. At this point everybody is clutching at straws. Apart from the fact that we have seen so much of an increase of homelessness, the other issue is that there are children in that system, and they have special needs.

WHAT OF OTHERS?

Ali and Mobo are two young children who are very developmentally delayed. Without the support the crèche offers their life chances were getting more and more damaged, damage they would carry with them for the rest of their lives. And, the crèche is full, there is a waiting list.

What about all the others not in services?

Families as described in our story above are already struggling with a range of issues including isolation, homelessness, dealing with applications in relation to their legal status in Ireland, addiction, mental health issues, racism and poverty.

The parents simply need help to navigate the system to get the supports that they need for their children. When that help does not materialise what then?

* *The Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE) programme is a universal two-year pre-school programme available to all children within the eligible age range.*

It provides children with their first formal experience of early learning prior to commencing primary school. The programme is provided for three hours per day, five days per week over 38 weeks per year and the programme year runs from September to June each year.

More info: <https://bit.ly/gov-ECCE>

DONEGAL: Development Education

Changemakers in action over 10 years adds up to a lot of change



BY KATIE BARR*

- *To date, the ChangeMakers project has reached over 1,500 people through workshops and training.*
- *Over 100 people in Donegal have participated in accredited development education training.*
- *It has a mentoring programme for organisations wishing to incorporate development education into their activities.*

DONEGAL CRABS

Crab and lobster are plentiful off our coasts and this Irish Brown Crab was caught by Friel Seafood in Co. Donegal. Yet local supermarkets still fly in crab from Asia. This led to a eureka moment for local woman Bébhinn Mullins (see main story) when she bought crab in a local shop that came from Indonesia. For the first time she began thinking about the food miles.



• Photo from Friel Seafood - follow them on Facebook to find out where to buy their crab and lobster.

More than 80 people we call ChangeMakers gathered on June 9th at an Grianan Hotel in Burt, Co. Donegal, on the southern end of the Inishowen peninsula, to celebrate the project making a real difference across Donegal over the past 10 years.

ChangeMakers – an Inishowen Development Partnership initiative which is partnered with Donegal ETB, Self Help Africa, Trócaire and Concern - tackles global issues such as sustainability, climate change, fair trade and food waste, but on a local level within Donegal.

Funded by Irish Aid, the project has made an impact in communities and has changed people's outlooks.

One of the star speakers on the day in Burt was Bébhinn Mullins from Clonmany who told how taking part in the ChangeMakers Global

Development course during the pandemic changed her perspective.

Prior to Covid, Bébhinn, who is the manager of the Clonmany Community Centre in North Inishowen, had become involved with an organisation called 'FoodCloud' which redistributes food which is near its sell-by-date and which was previously dumped by supermarkets.

"We started by getting the food and bringing it into the centre and teaching the children at the afterschool club about how you can get all this perfectly good food for free," explained Bébhinn. Through the children, the centre began to distribute food.

"It was a really beautiful thing and the children loved it. But then Covid hit and we didn't have the kids at the centre, but I couldn't say no to FoodCloud because I knew if

we didn't take this food it would be thrown in the skip."

COVID CHANGED EVERYTHING

When Covid-19 hit, the community centre closed to the public and households entered lockdown.

"We had to think of a different way of working so we gathered the food and put it in boxes at the front door of the community centre. Families would walk down and take what they wanted. We also organised safe drive-bys for people to come and collect the food – it became a highlight for people during a time of fear and anxiety," Bébhinn said.

"Our volunteers really did great work during this time. It shows that everyone has the potential to be a



• ChangeMakers Steering Committee members and Irish Aid staff pictured at the 10 Year celebrations (L to R): Denny Elliot, Self Help Africa; Joanne Butler, ChangeMakers; Catherine Friel, Donegal ETB; Denise Mc Cool, IDP; Roisin O'Hara, Trocaire; Myra McAuliffe, ChangeMakers; Shauna McCleneghan, IDP; Maria Riordan, Irish Aid.

INISHOWEN GROUP BELIEVES IT HAS DEVELOPED A MODEL OF GOOD PRACTISE FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

(Cont'd from previous page)

ChangeMaker and everyone working or volunteering in the community is a ChangeMaker."

However Bébhinn's personal ChangeMaker moment came whenever she realised crab she had bought in her local supermarket had come from Indonesia, having travelled more than 12,000km by air and sea, when there are young men from Clonmany fishing crab every day of the week in her own locality.

"From doing the ChangeMakers Global Development course I had learned a lot about food travel and waste and I felt ashamed that I was eating this crab from Indonesia," Bébhinn told the seminar.

"I wanted to take action."

With help from FoodCloud, Bébhinn and the team set up the Clonmany Community Pantry. What started during lockdown as a box of free food at the front door of the centre has now expanded into a standalone walk-in container on the community centre site.

The pantry now, with a small membership fee of €15, provides food to more than 70 households in the Clonmany area.

"It's not a food bank. It's a way of making a positive contribution to reducing food waste and it's having a very positive impact on the community.

"The Pantry is not about what people have. It is not about poverty – although it is helping with that. Our focus is on food waste and what we can do to combat that and make the world a better place. It is a very small step but it is making a very big difference," said Bébhinn.

The team in Clonmany have now progressed through the help of their volunteers to launch the first student community pantry in NUI

Galway, with more than 100 students attending it on a daily basis.

Roisin O'Hara from Trócaire is a member of the ChangeMakers Steering Committee. She said the Clonmany Community Pantry is a perfect example of what can be achieved through ChangeMakers and through the right organisations.

"ChangeMakers plant the seeds for community groups such as this to grow," she told the 10th anniversary seminar.

CLIMATE CHANGE IN ZIMBABWE

Key Speaker on the day Sikhanyisile Dube told the crowd about her inspiring story of growing up in Zimbabwe and how climate change is having a devastating impact on Africa, causing drought, famine and hunger.

"Our childhood was a happy one, contrary to the belief that people in the villages are sad and hungry and poor, we were not," explained Sikhanyisile.

"It rained those days, it poured and filled wells. Rivers overflowed with water and the forests were revived each year into lush green carpets. We collected herbs, bulbs and roots from the forests and a variety of wild fruits on our way from school and when herding cattle. We were never short of fun and enjoyed swimming in low tide waters and catching fish from our local river."

However in the early 2000s that life disappeared with the very real effects of climate change turning the once green village into desert.

"Rain patterns have changed, and become erratic. Most of the herbs and plants that had both medicinal and nutritional value have disappeared. It



• Above-Right: Garda Anna McGranaghan, Denise McCool, IDP, Andrew Ward, IDP, Ciara Breen, Families Matter, and Jacqueline Cagder, Alocchol Forum at the ChangeMaker 10 Year Seminar.



• Above-left: Behhinn Mullins Clonmany Community Centre and Siskhanyisile Dube. Photos courtesy IDP.

became a fight just to feed the family."

Sikhanyisile and her family moved to Ireland in September 2021 and found themselves in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, where she became involved with ChangeMakers.

She urged people to "push for change" to try and reverse damage already caused by climate change.

"I dream of one day being able to take my children to the Africa I remember with the rivers and greenery, but scientists have warned that if we do not reduce our carbon emissions, we risk our planet warming by 1.5 degrees," she said.

"What can we do? Start small, start local. We can do so much within our own household, but we can also push for change from our service providers and within our communities."

"I look forward to making change with you all," she said.

* Katie Barr works as an administrator with IDP. She previously worked as a journalist.

THINK & TAKE ACTION

- Food miles V Buying local
- Sharing V Waste
- Global action locally
- Citizen empowerment
- Nurturing hope amidst climate change

IRISH AID

MARIA RIORDAN, Education Officer with Irish Aid, who are the main funders of ChangeMakers, said it was great to see so many like minded people in the same room.

"When communities come together - make connections, share conversations and ideas - wonderful things can happen," she said.

"It takes a whole community to try and tackle the global issues – but we at Irish Aid are grateful to ChangeMakers for setting the standard, sharing the knowledge. With the help of all the agencies, they are creating a fairer, more sustainable future for all of us."

FURTHER INFO

<https://changemakers.ie/>

WHY WE TACKLE GLOBAL ISSUES IN A LOCAL WAY

- The inside story on 10 years of making change in Donegal

When three separate groups in Donegal came together, in July 2012, with the idea of connecting local and global communities to try and tackle issues such as sustainability, climate change, food waste and more, no one expected the journey it would take.

ChangeMakers Donegal has, for the last ten years, been the model organisation in the county for tackling the big global issues while at the same time keeping it very local and accessible.

The original “changemakers” Patsy Toland from Self Help Africa, Denise McCool from Inishowen Development Partnership and Crona Gallagher from the Donegal Education and Training Board were brought together through IDP ten years ago but since then relationships have developed and evolved, while keeping the ethos of ChangeMakers to the fore.

Former school principal **Patsy Toland, from Clonmany in North Inishowen**, had been working for Self Help Africa in local schools in Donegal promoting the work they do and talking to local students about life in Africa when he met Denise McCool from Inishowen Development Partnership, who was working on a global citizenship in schools initiative.

“Denise was working for IDP within the school setting and local community groups talking about things like equality, fairtrade, community food initiatives, including food waste, and I was doing the global side of things,” explained Patsy.

“I was really interested in what Denise was doing and she was the same in what I was doing, it was then it was like a lightbulb moment that we realised we should be working together to put out these programmes together.”

LINKING LOCAL TO GLOBAL

For IDP’s Denise McCool it was highlighting the work they were doing into the wider community. “Patsy and I had been working with local primary and secondary schools in global citizenship education – we felt this needed to move outside the school and into the community, to the parents and wider society,”



• The original ChangeMakers: Denise McCool, Patsy Toland and Crona Gallagher.

“Community development is about empowerment, addressing inequalities and social justice, so the links between this work and global justice were clear.”

explained Denise.

“For this work to be sustainable and action to take place locally it made sense to link with the work we were doing in community development and adult education. Community development is about empowerment, addressing inequalities and social justice so the links between this work and global justice were clear for us in our own work.

“The ETB were doing great work with communities locally and we had

worked together on various projects, so they were a natural partner. Added to this Crona had worked in the global south and so brought that understanding and awareness to the work too.”

Inishowen Development Partnership became the lead partner, along with Donegal ETB, and Self Help Africa and submitted a joint application for funding from Irish Aid, ChangeMakers Donegal was born.

As it progressed, natural links

developed with Trócaire and Concern, two organisations that focused strongly on human rights and social justice, and they joined the collaboration.

Over the last ten years ChangeMakers have been involved in various projects within the community such as Fairtrade towns, community gardening, climate justice, human rights, refugees, gender equality and so much more.

Joanne Butler, Development Officer with ChangeMakers, said there are amazing projects taking place throughout Donegal.

“There is so much happening within ChangeMakers. For example, through our Seeds of Change programme we have funded projects with local groups such as Ethical April, in Dunfanaghy, which highlights issues such as sustainable fashion and plastic pollution and in Inishowen, we have the Inishowen River’s Trust which is working with their local community on biodiversity projects such as eel migration and habitat loss.

“ChangeMakers is going from strength to strength and there is a great amount of pride within IDP but seeing local community groups and individuals take action is what we as an organisation are most proud of,” added Joanne.

- BY KATIE BARR

3 RECENT CHANGEMAKERS EVENTS

ChangeMakers is making a mark. For instance, before Covid over 650 people took part in a single event in 2018.

Here are three recent initiatives:

- Workshops on tax, justice and how money works.
- Courses to introduce people to growing food and community gardening.
- ChangeMakers runs a monthly film night with all proceeds going to a new Donegal documentary fund for filmmakers interested in local stories with global connections.





Will a community food pantry movement take off in Ireland?



• TOP LEFT: Ana Patricia Non in Cagayan de Oro, Mindinao. Photo/Follow: patreng.non on Instagram. RIGHT: People line up at a community pantry in San Jose del Monte City. Photo: Harmony Hills community pantry.

• Over two years, Clonmany Community Centre's community pantry, has, by partnering with Foodcloud, collected and redistributed over 7,000 kg of food. This is the equivalent of almost 17,000 meals. It has also achieved almost 23,000 kg of CO2 savings.

The community pantry movement took off in the Philippines on April 14, 2021, when 26-year-old Ana Patricia Non placed a foodcart on a street in Quezon City and attached a simple cardboard sign which read: "Magbigay ayon sa kakayahan, kumuha batay sa pangangailangan" (meaning "Give what you can, take what you need").

She posted what she had done on social media and amidst severe Covid lockdowns the post went viral and within a week 200 others had followed her example. At the latest count there were 6,700 community pantries operating across the Philippines.

Foodbanks were not new to the Philippines but, as Ana said, the community pantries are different.

"This community pantry became a way to prove to ourselves that we can help one another, and we are able to organise ourselves," she said.

Due to Ana and all who followed her example in the Philippines, the country seems to have become the world leader in community food pantries.

Interestingly, a membership fee does not seem to apply in the Philippines.

Nearer to home, the community food pantry movement is growing slowly in Britain.

In Scotland, in 2018, a community group opened Scotland's first community pantry with the aim of overcoming the stigma of food banks. Members of the Woodside Pantry pay an annual membership fee of £3, then a charge of £2.50 per shop, which allows them to pick 10 items from an array of fresh, frozen and packaged produce.

Today, across Britain, there are over 65 community pantries. This website describes their social impact: <https://www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk/>

In Ireland, Clonmany's pantry in Co. Donegal has stirred such interest that recently Foodcloud asked its leaders to address their board.

Pantries can be run by organisations or community groups and they are aimed at helping those who may not qualify for foodbanks. Their aims are wider and they can support people long-term and empower communities.

If they take off here, who knows how big the movement could become.

- BY ALLEN MEAGHER

Globally 17% of food goes directly into the bin generating 8-10% global greenhouse gas emissions. In 2020 a national survey showed that Irish households produce over 250,000 tonnes of food waste per year at a cost of €700 per household.



LESSONS FROM UGANDA TO INISHOWEN

The world of 50 years ago compared to now, as seen through the eyes of older people in Donegal and in Uganda was told in six online video workshops recorded via Zoom in 2021. The idea came to Patsy Toland who used to be a development worker with Self-Help Africa during lockdown. Each interview he conducted was connected to the UN's sustainable development goals and looked at energy, transport, consumption / fast fashion, education, food, life on the land and climate.

From hearing of cattle rustlers in Uganda to the cold when attending school in winter rural Ireland, Toland's interviews showed positives

too from back in the day.

"We could find food from the sea all year round," said Ann Donovan from Donegal. On clothing, she said, "Shopping for clothes was seldom and anything that could be mended or remodelled, that's what was done."

Not everyone wants to return to Singer sewing machines, but the old ways were often more sustainable.

John Michael Ngwaru (70) from Uganda recalled that the food people ate when he was young was tastier and more nutritious. "People didn't have ulcers and other health problems."

He said there were more trees

and less flooding and connected the disappearance of one with the arrival of the other.

The next phase of the project is 'The ChangeMakers Elder Trees Roadshow' which involves showing the videos in public settings to get Donegal people talking about what they remember.

"If you go back two generations, they did not have the problems we have today. Food was grown or sourced locally, we reared our animals, walked to school, used food waste as fertiliser and so on. And I found from my time working in Uganda that their life was just the

same," said Toland.

"They did the same things as my father would have done growing up on a farm in Donegal. The rural communities in Uganda would help sustain each other as often they were too far away from the market to sell produce and had no means of travel."

See the interviews for yourself on ChangeMakers' Youtube channel.



UBUNTU: Refugee life in Athlone

INTERVIEW

David helped asylum seekers in his own country until he had to flee for his life - Now he's helping refugees and youths here

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

Imagine caring for and helping refugees arriving into your country, destitute and frightened. Such was David Nesengani's life in South Africa until he was in his 50's and the tables were turned on him and he and his wife had to flee for their lives.

He said, "I used to take basic care of asylum-seekers from other countries. I would get food from churches and provide them with clothes and shelter - sometimes in my church, sometimes in my place.

"Then we were targeted. My wife is a foreigner and suffered from xenophobia. They burned the whole place. Churches helped to get people out.

"Even now if you go to my country - you still find on a daily basis people killing each other, from xenophobia. Also people in political organisations are targeted.

"Sometimes in Europe, during interviews, we are told that according to the European Convention my country is marked as a safe country. They stand on the side of accusing you when there is no such thing as safe there for us," he said.

He and Fortune are now settled in Athlone, awaiting the outcome of their application for refugee status.

"My work has always been with people. In Johannesburg, I used to do local government work - sometimes building streets, sometimes on housing projects taking 5 years," continued David.

"I volunteered in the church for more than 10 years. It was a time when many people were dying, nearly every day, from HIV/AIDS.

"I also served as a petrol attendant in a garage - I've always been dealing with people.

"My favourite is working in the community, especially the most vulnerable people. Even here in Ireland, the work I've most enjoyed is all about building trust and caring for people," he said.

As part of his Level 5 Health Services Skills, he worked for 10 days in Stella Maris Nursing Home. He also volunteers with Gateway Youth Project:

"I'm with them for some years now. I make a good connection with the parents too," he said.



• David Nesengani helping a boy in the homework club.

"People must feel safe with you, especially asylum-seekers because they usually have challenges on a daily basis. We have new arrivals all the time. The trust you establish comes from the way you interact with people. I identify with their interests and see where I can assist them," he said. "When you are an asylum seeker things won't happen around you unless you reach out to people."

VOLUNTEERS SLEEP BETTER

David has settled in like a duck to water. He's now a proper townie, knowing nearly everyone. He has an edge on other asylum-seekers who do not speak English and, according to locals, has made a tremendous effort helping others. Just as he did in South Africa.

"I've lived a peaceful life since coming to Athlone. Here, I feel who I am. I'm encouraged by the people I meet, in all the things that I do. I like serving communities," he said.

He recalled recently volunteering with people with disabilities, talking with them and planting flowers.

"Some people like to do things with their hands - art for example. It's so interesting to see what they make - it empowers them.

"Helping others makes you sleep

so very well. I always encourage people to help others. In South Africa we call it 'Ubuntu'," he said.

His work with Gateway, among others, involves alerting people to the health implications of the choices they make.

"You make them aware of the world around them and to not just follow their peer group, smoking or taking drugs. You create a safe environment - let them feel they can expand. It's interesting to see most of the parents - they sometimes come from a place where they are not used to helping other people."

"Ubuntu - that's the way I grew up and I brought it with me," he said.

"In Athlone, you get to know people in a small time. I didn't have a permit to work, but people asked me to come and help them, for example, working in a community garden or helping with older people. Almost everybody knows me now and I'm back to my original self here.

"People in Athlone are very good at heart - they all give you a smile. They ask your name. I can't remember anyone who was rough with me.

"I am not suitable anymore to live in a city like Dublin. You regain all your values in a small town. In the city, everybody is busy. Cities were good when I was in my 20's: Now



• David with his wife Fortune.

"I've arrived where I should be," he said.

DIRECT PROVISION

Regarding people living in Direct Provision (DP) he said, "For some it is like they are like hibernating. For others like me who speak English and who are able to go out more easily, it is okay."

A group of them set up a choir.

"Sometimes you'll hear us on Athlone radio. Lots of Irish people like our choir," he said, recalling how

One person's volunteering can make "a huge difference"

BY KIERAN BURKE*

(Cont'd from previous page)

a death introduced them to a great number of local people.

"We sang at a funeral and they like how we behave. It was a well-attended funeral and we sing now at funerals when asked," he said.

Mourning the death of an asylum-seeker also brought those living in DP in Athlone closer to local people.

"He just collapsed in my hands. He was saying 'Pray for me'... a guy from Zimbabwe. He died in my arms... But that funeral brought people together and the Irish were a great support," he said.

ATTITUDE CHANGES

He commended the Gateway Youth Project, among others:

"People should continue to support these kind of organisations. They have the common purpose of wanting to see people improving in their lives. They make them feel safe. They empower them. When I came here I couldn't cook - they taught us.

"When people experience problems and are referred to Gateway, you see after a few weeks they change their attitude to the best."

COMMENDED GOV'T

He even commended the Government, Tusla and social workers for "operating to an excellent standard" - praise not often heard from Irish people

"They are on the right track dealing with humanity," said David.

On DP, he said: "It's very challenging, but too much noise doesn't resolve all issues. People are dynamic. If you think that when Direct Provision ends everything will be fine, there will be new challenges. This year you're using a phone. You'll always want the better one.

"I can tell you, if you come to my country, they won't supply you with one resource. Here, your basic needs are met."

"I feel better seeing more people in Direct Provision getting work permits. If you are not working you are rotting every day. That was a good change. Some people are burning with talents and others are willing to learn and work," he said.

The support of an enthusiastic team of volunteers is essential to successfully delivering our service and we rely on the goodwill and active support of an enthusiastic team of volunteers. One of the most enthusiastic of the volunteers been involved in Gateway since 2017 is David Nesengani.

David is originally from South Africa and has lived in Athlone Accommodation Centre for the past four years while his asylum application is being processed.

The first interaction we had with David was as part of a community garden that Athlone Community Taskforce were involved in in the Lissywollen direct provision site (on the town's outskirts). This was a very successful cross-community project which David led.

David's natural empathy was something he used in forming relationships with our young people from all communities and he quickly established himself as a very popular member of the Gateway team.

He is a great advocate for the project and has volunteered, among other programmes, with:

- our Afterschool Hub,
- Alternative Suspension Programme (working with young people in danger of school expulsion),



• **ABOVE:** David Nesengani leading people involved in Lissywollen Community Garden which promotes cross-community cooperation and environmental awareness and continues to reap benefits for young people living in Direct Provision in Athlone.

- Healthy Living (supported by Athlone Drug Awareness Group)
- and our Army Training Programme in co-operation with the Defence Forces.

This all led to David completing a very successful student placement with Gateway in 2019/2020 as part of his AIT studies. Afterwards, David still gave time to Gateway in a voluntary capacity. He, and his wife Fortunata, seem to be an unofficial welcoming committee for new arrivals to Athlone



• **ABOVE:** David with the Lads Healthy Living Group on a day's outing to Courtlough Adventure Grounds.

Accommodation Centre and it is through them that many young people who have just arrived here have found their way to Gateway.

This community leadership has also been evident during the strict Covid lockdown restrictions, when access to the Lissywollen site was difficult. David took it upon himself to prepare and maintain the community garden and co-ordinate access to beds/equipment for other residents, to liaise with Gateway to provide

seeds and pots to young people living in the Direct Provision site who have sown and grown their own vegetables and flowers.

This selfless dedication would not cause David a moment's pause, but it made a huge difference to the lives of those young people during a difficult time.

* Kieran Burke is a youth worker with the project.

About Gateway Youth Project

Gateway Youth Project, based in St Mary's Hall in Athlone, Co. Westmeath, aims to improve the lives of young people in the area.

The project has a particular emphasis on serving young people living in Direct Provision, young people outside of education/employment, LGBT youth, the Traveller/Roma community, and young people who have moved to Ireland from abroad.

Gateway provides individual support as well as group activities ranging from educational supports such as an afterschool study hub and subject-focussed study groups to more social

activities (eg Camera Club, Bike Repair Workshop, Art Club).

"Successful integration and building individual resilience and confidence in our young people are the guiding goals for our work," says youth worker Kieran Burke.

The project is a partnership between **Athlone Community Taskforce** and **Foróige** and has two staff, both funded by **Longford/Westmeath Education and Training Board. Westmeath**



Volunteer Centre helps to provide volunteers.

Westmeath Community Development played a significant role in setting up the project and remains involved and some of the project's funding comes through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme.



W: <https://www.facebook.com/GatewayYouthProjectAthlone/>



6 rudaí maithhe ag tarlú i Saol na Gaeilge

BY SORCHA GRISEWOOD

An raibh a fhios agat go raibh rudaí spéisiúla ag tarlú maidir leis an Ghaeilge le déanaí? Seans nach raibh, ach tá cuma ar an scéal go bhfuil i bhfad níos mó rudaí dearfacha ag tarlú maidir leis an teanga le déanaí...

1. An Ghaeilge san Eoraip. De bharr iarrachtaí tiomanta gníomhaithe an teanga, tá stadad iomlán oifigiúil oibre bainte amach ag an Ghaeilge anois. Ciallaíonn sé seo go mbeidh sí mar teanga atá ar chomhchéim le teangacha oifigiúla eile san Aontas Eorpach agus go gcaithfear reachtaíocht a aistriú go Gaeilge.

2. Scannáin nua trí mheáin na Gaeilge a léiríonn ní hamháin stair na tíre seo ach chomh maith le sin, an saibhreas agus áilleacht ár teanga. Scannán ar nós "Arracht" (Monster nuair a thagann an galar agus nuair a ardaíonn an tiarna talún áitiúil na rátaí.

Is í "Foscadh" ("Shelter" as Béarla) scannán eile trí Ghaeilge ó Seán Breathnach bunaithe ar úrscéal scríofa ag Donal Ryan, "The Thing About December".

Beidh scannán eile as Gaeilge - "An Cailín Ciúin" ón scríbhneoir agus stiurthóir Colm Bairéad - agus tá an tóir air an bhliain seo.

3. Na meáin cumarsáide & na meáin sóisialta- Go leor podchraoltaí ar fáil as Gaeilge ar nós "Beo ar Éigean" ar RTÉ, "Splanc" ar Newstalk, "Seal le Seán" ar raidió RíRá & cinn eile ar raidió na Gaeltachta. Maraon le sin, tá an t-uafás cuntais dírithe ar an Ghaeilge & go h-áirithe foghlaim na Gaeilge ar na meáin sóisialta.

Má leanann tú an t-údar Manchán Magan, a scríobh an leabhar álainn, "Tree Dogs, Banshee Fingers and other words for Irish Nature", cuireann sé suas focail nua as Gaeilge ón tsean Ghaeilge, ón bealoideas nó bainteach leis an dúlra beagnach gach lá ar a cuntas Instagram.

Cuntas eile ar Instagram (agus ar Twitter) atá an-cabhrach i gcóir daoine atá ag iarraidh Gaeilge a fhoghlaim ná an ceann atá ar Julie-Ann De Brún,



An incident of road rage in the Irish Language took place when a cyclist and a van driver disagreed over the rules of the road.

• A recent road rage incident as Gaeilge went semi-viral, spawning Reddit discussions and more. The clash between a cyclist and a van driver in Connemara is on Youtube (one version is subtitled). Be warned - neither party holds back in cursing. As one viewer remarked: "My hope is that a video like this will tune the majority into the fact that there is a whole other culture on this island separate from the anglophone one."

múinteoir bunscoile i Co na Gaillimhe a chuireann suas frásaí úsáideacha as Gaeilge, bunaithe ar téama/topaic de ghnáth.

Déanann an t-iriseoir Úna Minh Caomhánach an chuid oibre chun an teanga a chur cun cinn agus tá cainéal aici ar You Tube leis a tuairimí maidir le foghlaim na Ghaeilge agus rudaí eile a bhfuil suim aici ann. Tá ceann anseo le fothaidil maidir leis an taithí a bhí aici agus í ag ceannach tí i mBaile Átha Cliath lena phairtí: <https://bit.ly/teachBAC22>

4. Deiseanna postanna a fháil leis an Ghaeilge! Fógraíodh post le Gaeilge le déanaí ar Instagram. Bhí an chomhlacht ag lorg cainteoirí líofa chun obair mar ionadaithe seirbhís chustaiméirí sa Ghréig! Nach iontach an deis é sin más rud é gur cainteoir óg líofa thú agus ba bhreá leat éalú go

dtí tír deas griannmhar agus tréimhse a chaitheamh ann?! Anois freisin, toisc go bhfuil an Ghaeilge ar chomhchéim le teangacha eile san Aontas Eorpach, beidh níos mó deiseanna post maith (agus tuarastal maith!) a fháil sna instidiúidí Eorpacha má tá Gaeilge ar do thoil agat! Má tá tuilleadh eolais uait, téigh go dtí suíomh an Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha anseo: <https://www.dfa.ie/prep/brussels/eu-jobs/>

5. Grúpa ealaíne aeracha le Ghaeilge a bhfuil breis agus 60 ealaíontóirí "aiteacha" ann idir scríbhneoirí, ceoltóirí, dramadóirí, ghrianghrafadóirí, thaibheoirí draig agus ealaíontóirí físe agus fuaime mar bhaill ann. Is féidir leat tuilleadh eolais a fháil ag an suíomh seo: <https://www.aerachaiteachgaelach.net/fuinn>

TRANSLATION: 6 Positive things happening with the Irish Language

Did you know that there were interesting things happening around the Irish language at the moment? Here are some of them...

1. Irish in the EU. Thanks to the efforts of committed activists who have been campaigning for years, the Irish language is now an official working language in the European Union. This means that it is now on an equal footing with other official EU languages and all legislation enacted by the EU will be translated into Irish.

2. New films entirely 'as Gaeilge' that showcase not only Ireland's history, but also the beauty and richness of our language. Films such as "Arracht" (Monster) from director Tom Sullivan about the famine and its impact on a fisherman when the blight arrives and the local landlord raises the rates. "Foscadh" (Shelter) is another Irish language film from director Seán Breathnach based on Donal Ryan's novel, "The Thing About December".

Another film in Irish, "An Cailín Ciúin" (The Quiet Girl) from writer and director Tom Bairéad, is popular this year.

3. Media and social media. There are lots of podcasts 'as Gaeilge' at the moment for those looking to learn or improve their Irish. RTÉ's "Beo ar Éigean", "Splanc" on Newstalk, "Seal le Seán" on Radio RíRá and other podcasts on Raidió na Gaeltachta.

In addition, there are plenty of Irish language learning accounts on social media. If you follow author Manchán Magan, who wrote the lovely, "Tree Dogs, Banshee Fingers & other words for Irish Nature", he posts a new word from the old Irish or oral tradition or nature-related almost every day on his Instagram account.

Julie-Ann De Brún is a primary school teacher in Galway and her accounts on Instagram and Twitter are very helpful for Irish language learners. She posts useful phrases and vocabulary, usually topic

or theme-based.

Finally, journalist Úna Minh Caomhánach (Kavanagh) is a huge promoter of the Irish language and has her own channel on You Tube where she discusses her thoughts about learning the language and other issues. There's a video here with subtitles where she talks about her experience of buying a house in Dublin with her partner: <https://bit.ly/teachBAC22>

4. Jobs with Irish. A job appeared recently on Instagram and the company advertising it was looking for Customer Service representatives fluent in Irish to work in Greece! What a great opportunity for a young Irish speaker who fancies a job in the sun for a time...! There's also more opportunities for fluent Irish speakers in the EU institutions (and good pay and conditions as well!) because Irish is now an official working language of the EU. For more information about these opportunities, go to the Department of

Raidió na Gaeltachta celebrates its 50th year broadcasting this year and it would never have been only for activists campaigning in the 1970s.

To mark the occasion, we asked Sorcha Grisewood to identify a half-dozen positive developments that are important to all who speak Irish and those who would like to speak it more often.



6. Peil Gaelach a imirt agus Gaeilge a fhoghlaim agus a labhairt ag an am céanna. Tá na Gaeil Óga lonnaithe in iarthar Baile Átha Cliath agus tá siad ar an gcumann spóirt is mó fáis in Éirinn ó bhunaíodh siad i 2010. Faoi láthair tá 30 foireann acu, idir daoine fásta agus foirne faoi aois freis agus tá breis is 500 baill imeartha acu. Cuireann siad ranganna Gaeilge ar fáil d'imreoirí agus tuismitheoirí ar chaighdeán éagsúla. Ghaeilge atá dírithe ar téarmaíocht atá ag teastáil le cluichí a imirt!

Foreign Affairs website at <https://www.dfa.ie/prep/brussels/eu-jobs/>

5. An Arts group for gay Irish language speakers which boasts sixty "queer" artists, among them writers, musicians, dramatists, photographers, drag artists and sound and vision artists. More information can be found at the following link: <https://www.aerachaiteachgaelach.net/fuinn>

6. Opportunities to play Gaelic football and learn Irish at the same time! The Gael Óige club are to be found in west Dublin and are the largest sports club in Ireland since they started in 2010. They currently have 30 teams and over 500 members, between adults and kids. Irish language classes are available for players and parents of all abilities. The classes focus on the language and terminology you will need to play the games!

The Token Woman

I am the token woman
That's how I earned my place
Its quite an education
I'm qualified in grace

A place earned at the table
With humble pie to eat
Eyes roll if she's capable
Disruptive when she speaks

She just fills a quota
but we need real hard skills
Fixing system failure
A big black hole to fill

No woman is a token
She's a person with a face
On the ballot sheet
With too little and too late

Equality, respect for all
Instead fear and hate
See the token woman
Break through the rusty gate

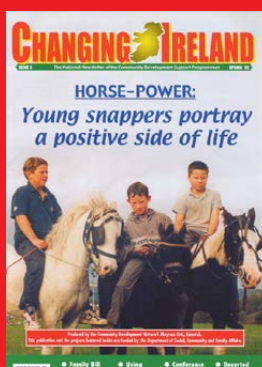
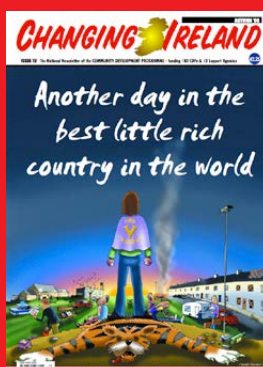
- Helen Mulhall



• Photo by Artem Beliaikin from Pexels

21 YEARS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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REFUGEE SOLIDARITY

Community workers operate in a somewhat strained atmosphere as refugee supports publicly questioned

- Online mix of sympathy, understanding, mistruths & anger

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

The welcome towards Ukrainian refugees is not as universal as it was in February, as shown by hostile comments from Irish people regarding refugees who were living in tents in a recycling centre. (Those refugees have now been moved to student accommodation for the summer, after which time they will be moved again to who knows where.)

The story they commented on was published by a reputable local newspaper and the ensuing discussion on Facebook was among local people commenting under their real names.

Alison, who only last February sported a Ukrainian flag on her page, responding to news about the refugees being given accommodation wrote: "Charity begins at home".

She got 12 likes.

The majority of people showed they care, some preferred to put their own interests first, many blamed the government and others are of course only online for a laugh.

Derek replied to the tents story saying: "They're used to the cold being from that area."

Martina saw a bigger picture: "It's the government's fault they should never have brought them people in here when they haven't their 'house' in order. Our housing situation is a disaster & the government is making the Irish resent these people & it's not their fault, they were running from a war."

Nora agreed with her: "They didn't ask for this to happen, so be nice. I hope they get sorted out."

But Tom was having none of it: "Every time a 'refugee' gets somewhere to live that's a place an Irish family could have had."

Back and forwards the argument went. People are well informed about the housing crisis - or disaster as President Higgins terms it - and some spoke from personal experience.

Paul was swamped with 37 likes when he said simply: "I'm a proud Irishman and this country doesn't care about our own people."

John replied: "The homeless crisis and our humanitarian obligation to refugees are two completely separate issues... It's not a triage situation. Must do both. We don't do enough for either."

He received 26 likes.

Erica
2 d · 🌐

Im All About Helping Them I Have Donated To Them When The War Started But This Is A Joke All Handed Keys Of 3 Bed Apartments While Are Own Are Dying On The Streets And Mothers Like Myself Spending Years In Hotels And Hubs With Not Even A Proper Sink To Wash Baby's Bottles. An Absolute Joke 🤡

** The keys in question will be handed back in September when students return and the refugees will be moved once more.*

Such online debate on Facebook – mostly between people living in the same place – can be healthy. However, when misinformation creeps in, people can lose the plot.

An Erica raised the temperature with a video she shared showing Ukrainian refugees who she said were given "the keys" to 3-bedroom apartments. She posted a few seconds of video (seemingly from another part of the country) of people alighting from a bus outside student accommodation. The commentary said: "About 100 Ukrainians handed apartments down here. An absolute joke and our own on the streets in town, men and all there."

Many took it that the refugees were all but housed for life.

"A disgrace."

"Scandalous."

"Disgusting."

"Can't help our own - leaving 'em to die."

Erica wrote, "I'm all about helping them. I have donated when the war started, but this is a joke. All handed

keys of 3 bed apartments while our own are dying on the streets and mothers like myself spending years in hotels and hubs with not even a proper sink to wash baby's bottles. Absolute joke."

The joke will be on us all with rising racism. The government needs to better communicate to the general public that Ukrainian refugees – while they are entitled to social welfare, medical care and access to jobs – DO NOT qualify for social housing. This should be widely broadcast in the same way that Covid alerts and health advice was issued.

Some of the more unsympathetic messages posted in the same online discussion included:

Jack: "Send them back now it's safe the capital Kiev. This is shocking but it's all the government open door policy while poor Irish are forgotten."

Lisa: "I'm not racist, but you'll get better treatment if you paint your face or speak a different language - you'll be treated like kings and queens."

And, as so often in online debates, there were the conspiracy theorists.

Barry wrote: "This was all designed and purposely done. Stop this nonsense over their fake war. I've been researching this sh** for years. Wake up people."

Danny was right with him: "None of these Ukrainians are fleeing war-torn countries. We are being lied to. They are pulling up outside *** school in €60,000 cars and jeeps dressed up to the nines in designer gear, all the whilst our own indigenous are being kicked to the kerb."

Would he be more welcoming to refugees who come with only a backpack as many have done?

This reaction to one innocuous news story and a flimsy amateur video with misleading commentary, is no doubt being replicated in other parts of the country. When the facts are fairly reported, it can lead to healthy debate, but when facts are grey it leads at best to misguided outrage and at worst to racism.

Obviously, Ireland must look after existing public needs and war refugees fairly (and what about non-Ukrainians refugees?) and communicate clearly what the facts are. In the meantime, community workers and local public representatives must work on integration while facing a possible rise in intolerance.

One hopes Ukrainians who come across online discussions like this can disregard the negatives and embrace the positive.

"It's not their fault, they were running from a war."

V

"Send them back now it's safe the capital Kiev."

DONEGAL: PANDEMIC POSITIVES

THEY WANT TO STAY ONLINE

How one group's Zoom journey through Covid led to connection & creation



• *Can you call a bunch of people who have never met a group? You sure can! Look at what this group of home-based artists produced after meeting on Zoom. A total of 120 art works featured in their recent exhibition.*

Over 25 new artists from across Co. Donegal met in person for the first time on Saturday, May 28th, to open an exhibition of their artwork.

They had all met on Zoom during the pandemic.

The event was held in Inver Community Centre and showcased their artwork created over 18 months through online classes inspired by pandemic restrictions.

The art exhibition was organised by Donegal Local Development Company (DLDC) who supported the delivery of the online art workshops during lockdown through the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP).

These online art classes in the evenings gave participants space to relax and forget their worries for two hours.

They learnt new skills and connected with the outside world at a time when everyone was struggling with restrictions and fear during the pandemic and lockdown.

Workshop facilitator **Colm Sweeney** said, "Online art workshops are hard to explain, but I discovered with my Men's Shed group early in lockdown when we started meeting via Zoom that it was possible and actually worked well. When

the opportunity arose to offer art classes online, I gave it a go".

Kathy Cunningham, Lifelong Learning Project Officer with DLDC advertised the workshops and they were very quickly full and there was clearly an appetite for more workshops.

Susan Kierce Marsh, Lifelong Learning Co-Ordinator with DLDC sat in on the art classes.

"Learning to paint with Colm Sweeney was far more than just an Art class, he included storytelling, and his calm tone made the class seem almost like a mindfulness session. Colm was fantastic in encouraging everyone to get out and look around them and appreciate the beauty locally including the colours, skyline, trees, and the local sites.

"These art classes provided a very valuable social connection for our clients," she said, delighted that they had reached a point where they were ready to exhibit.

For the exhibition, the community centre was packed out with exhibitors, family, friends and members of the public who travelled from across Donegal to view 120 pieces of art.

The exhibition was titled: "Our Zoom Journey of Creation and Connections during a Pandemic".

ONLINE ART GROUP WILL CONTINUE

When restrictions eased and following some discussion the majority of the group were happy to continue with their art classes delivered online via Zoom. The participants noted that the online session was very accessible, especially for those who were housebound, or those who didn't have transport.

Another benefit of the online class meant not having to move equipment, paints, painting etc - to and from a venue. The group could work together, while their paintings could be completed without ever needing to move them.



Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme



ABOVE: Colm Sweeney, tutor for the Zoom workshops, SICAP staff Susan Kierce Marsh, Aisling Sharkey and Kathy Cunningham, and Eddie Mulligan.



• The group of Donegal artists finally meet up!

Equality & Early Years

WE NEED MORE MEN AND BETTER PAY IN CHILDCARE

BY KATIE BARR

Gender balance, employment equality, gender inclusion, these are all buzz terms we are all too familiar with in Ireland in 2022, thankfully.

Children are taught that girls can do everything boys can do and vice versa. In the workplace women are encouraged to aim as high as possible achieving everything and more of the male counterparts.

However, it would seem that there is one sector that is far behind the scale in terms of gender equality - the early years childcare sector.

In 1996 the European Commission Network on Childcare set a target for a male participation rate in the sector to be set at a rate of 20 per cent by 2020. However in Ireland, in 2022, the true figure for the number working in the early years childcare sector is believed to be about one per cent.

Childcare, it would seem, is still very much seen as a 'women's job' in Ireland. And it is not just Ireland. In the UK, it is also a female-dominated workforce where only approximately three percent of childcare workers are male. Even in countries who are applauded for gender equality like Norway, 10 percent of their early years workers are male. Social stereotypes, it would seem, are the hardest to overcome.

The benefits of having more men working with our young children are evident and well documented. But why is the job consistently regarded as female's profession?

In Donegal one inspiring young man is hoping to break that mould for the next generation of male childcare workers.

In 2020 Darragh McGrath graduated from Letterkenny Institute of Technology with a first class honours degree in Childcare. He works fulltime in Newtowncunningham Playgroup in North Donegal, but Darragh is in the minority.

The numbers of men working in the childcare sector in Donegal is extremely low with Darragh being one of only two males to graduate in Childcare in LYIT that year.

But with some outdated attitudes still lingering within the community and pay and conditions for early years staff still far behind the level they should be, it's hard to see any real changes coming in the immediate future.

"When I started working here, people asked me what was I doing? They asked was I cutting the grass



• Colleagues Adele Ward and Darragh McGrath at Newtowncunningham Playgroup.

and doing maintenance. I think they thought I was the caretaker," said Darragh.

"I think there is still a level of fear that men will be laughed at or looked down on for working here, some people would have made comments to me, but it never bothered me.

"But I was very clear that I was working with the children. This is my dream job – I love working here and working with the children and seeing them progress. I would stay forever if I could but it might not always be realistic.

"Pay and conditions are so poor compared to Primary School Teachers or SNAs."

"Pay and conditions are so poor compared to Primary School Teachers or even SNAs – even during the summer months I have to sign on the dole as you don't get paid over holidays."

However that being said Darragh is fully committed to his job and has received great support from his fellow childcare workers in Newtowncunningham and during his time at LYIT.

"My experience has been so positive, I have great support here and when I was at college – they loved to see men doing the course. I never had an issue with any of the parents – everyone has been so welcoming. It is the most fulfilling job."

One of the benefits of having gender balance in the playgroup has been the support he has provided for children of lone parents.

"I have noticed that some of the children who have just mum in their life can gravitate towards more, and that's lovely that I can provide a male influence at a young age. It is very rewarding, and I think it would be very hard for someone to walk away once they start."

Pauline Coyle, who supervises

the Community Employment Childcare Scheme from Inishowen Development Partnership [IDP] on behalf of the Department of Social Protection, hopes there will be changes to this in the near future.

"I think the Government will step in and improve working conditions in early years."

"I think the Government will step in and improve working conditions in the early years sector. These people do such important, good work and they deserve to be paid in a way that reflects their hard work and dedication. It is shocking that young, highly educated people such as Darragh still have to apply for Jobseekers during the summer holidays," said Pauline.

Pauline said everyone in IDP would encourage more men to follow a career in childcare and she believes the CE scheme could be "a great place for anyone, who has been unemployed for 12 months or more, to get involved in the sector".

"The great thing about the CE scheme is that you get hands-on experience and your accredited training is fully covered."

"The great thing about the CE scheme is that you get hands-on experience and your accredited training is fully covered. The new module that has been recently developed leads to an even more professional specific qualification so it would give anyone – man or woman – a great opportunity to gain a high level qualification in childcare," she added.

Caroline Borden, Manager of Bocan Community Creche, said she would love to see more men coming

NEWS

Major reforms to RSS, Tús & CE schemes

Major reforms were announced on June 29th to Community Employment (CE), Tús and the Rural Social Scheme (RSS).

- The six-year time limit for participants on the RSS is gone.
- The eligibility criteria for Tús have been extended.
- Schemes are now allowed to directly recruit eligible candidates.

As Minister Heather

Humphreys pointed out, the schemes support vital local services such as childcare, meals-on-wheels, the maintenance and upkeep of local amenities and other critical work in communities.

Minister for State Joe O'Brien, said it was clear that "with the increased turnover of participants on schemes, post Covid, and in the tightening labour market, schemes are finding it difficult to recruit sufficient number of participants."

The reforms should help. They include continuing to allow schemes to extend individual placements and, where no replacement candidate is available, to retain existing participants.

There are currently over 19,000 participants on CE, almost 5,000 participants on Tús and almost 3,000 participants on the RSS. Government investment in the three schemes will amount to over €500 million in 2022.

An application process for ex-gratia payment for CE supervisors and assistants has also opened. This will benefit around 2,500 people. At a cost of over €24m, this resolves a long-running issue over pensions.

For more on this story, visit: <https://www.changingireland.ie/>

through the door.

"We have had a small number of male workers over the years and we have one [Sean Carroll] at present," explained Caroline.

"But I think society still states that the man is to be the breadwinner in the house and working in a preschool from 9am until 1pm doesn't suit the majority of men.

"The men that are coming in the sector at present are breaking the mould for the next group of men coming behind them. Hopefully we will continue to see more men like Sean coming in – everyone will be treated equally here," she said.