

# TUSLA CORK DECEMBER UPDATE

Tusla continues to process child protection referrals at this time, and recognises that the current conditions pose particular risks for vulnerable children and families.



CHRISTMAS EDITION  
FEATURING SUBMISSIONS  
FROM OUR COMMUNITY  
PARTNERS REFLECTING  
THEIR RESPECTIVE  
RESPONSES TO THE  
PANDEMIC THROUGHOUT THE  
YEAR



## SOME INTERESTING REPORTS

### Direct Division :

The Ombudsman for Children's Office report on the views and experiences of children living in Direct Provision accommodation during the Covid19 Pandemic, can be found in the library on [www.oco.ie/library](http://www.oco.ie/library).

**Prof. Conor O'Mahony (@ConorUCCLaw)**  
(tweeted on Wed, Dec 16, 2020):

*My Annual Report as Special Rapporteur on Child Protection has been published by the Government, and is available to download here: <https://t.co/MGRsUTE56L>. Here's a 90 second overview of 150 pages (sound or captions): <https://t.co/xpvwB6DvHr>*

## ONLINE RESOURCES

UCC Social Work Webinar No. 3 on 14th January, 10-11.30am. A new year of online innovative social work practice: where to next? Free event – all welcome.

Registration: [Click here](#)

Registration closes 12th January 2021 at noon.

Part of the @UCCsocialwork Online Social Work Practice initiative. Click here to visit UCC Padlet for tools, videos of previous webinars and resources.

Children's Research Network Bulletin from TCD available on

<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/64992587/csa-ce-research-bulletin-issue-2-november-2020>

Interpol Report finding that lockdown measures linked to #COVID19 had led to an increased sharing of child sexual exploitation material through peer-to-peer networks.

<https://t.co/L9xoGQmvMj>

Stop in Now UK and Ireland on spotting the warning signs for Child Exploitation:

<https://t.co/zTtBbAbR5z>

'To the Top of the Cliff: How Social Work Changed with Covid 19' - this book charts the social work response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Available for free download via the following link:

(<https://twitter.com/sarahmdonnelly1/status/13271769623668085ea7e9&s=03>)

Beacon House Trust Website focusing on developmental trauma

<https://beaconhouse.org.uk/resources/>

Also attached is their Advent Calendar looking at developmental Trauma

<https://calendar.myadvent.net/?id=c3ec814dd79c724e53ed3668085ea7e9&s=09>

International Social Work News

Useful YouTube channels for webinars you may have missed: The Alliance, ISPCAN, The Association of Child Protection Professionals.

Available on [IFSW.org](http://IFSW.org)

## A POEM FROM TOGHER FAMILY CENTRE

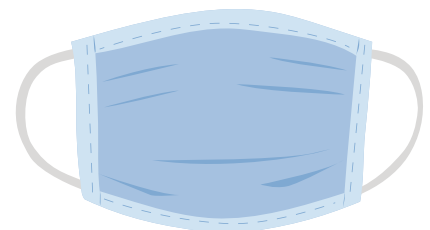
*By Kelly O'Brien...*

TOGHER FAMILY CENTRE IS BASED IN THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY,  
WHERE THE STAFF AIM TO EMPOWER AND EMBRACE A SENSE OF UNITY.  
FOR US, 20/20 STARTED LIKE ANY OTHER YEAR,  
LITTLE DID WE KNOW MARCH WOULD BE HARD TO BARE.

OFF WE SET, WORKING FROM HOME,  
KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH OUR FAMILIES THROUGH ZOOM OR THE PHONE.  
FOR A TEAM THAT'S SO ACTIVE, THIS JUST WASN'T ENOUGH,  
SO, WE GOT INTO GROUPS AND COMPLETED SOME WORK WHICH WAS TOUGH!

WE PAINTED AND PRIMED, WALLS, FENCES AND MORE,  
MAKING SURE OUR BUILDINGS GLEAMED FOR WHEN WE COULD REOPEN OUR DOOR.  
OUR CHILD CONTACT AND FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES CONTINUED THROUGH IT ALL,  
ENSURING OUR FAMILIES WERE SAFE AND HAD SOMEONE TO CALL.

FOR THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW US, WE ARE NOT ONES TO COD,  
SO, WE OPENED TWO NEW SERVICES CALLED BLOSSOM GROVE & THE POD.  
WE WOULD LIKE TO USE THIS MOMENT TO WISH YOU ALL SEASONS OF CHEER,  
ONWARDS AND UPWARDS, FOR A POSITIVE AND PRODUCTIVE NEW YEAR.



**TUSLA**  
An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanai agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

**CYPSC**  
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEES

Cork

[tusla.ie](http://tusla.ie)  
[cypsc.ie](http://cypsc.ie)  
[hse.ie](http://hse.ie)  
[gov.ie](http://gov.ie)  
[corkcity.ie](http://corkcity.ie)  
[corkcoco.ie](http://corkcoco.ie)

# TÍR NA NÓG



The Glen Community Crèche operates from Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.30pm 50 weeks of the Year. We are based at the Glen Resource Centre, The Glen, Cork City. We provide a full day care and part-time morning session. We cater for children from 12 months to 5 years. Supporting our community and the wider communities is one of our

key goals/within our mission statement for the service. The crèche has been an important community service for more than 20 years in our area. Throughout this year, our aims and objectives for the crèche have remained the same – to provide high quality childcare to our families and support wider agencies in our area. Given the situation we found ourselves in on the 12th March 2020 when Leo Varadkar announced the closure of all crèches and schools, we sadly had to close our doors at 5.30 that day. It was difficult not knowing when we could re-open and our thoughts were with all our wonderful children, parents and staff. We maintained communication with all our families, staff and other agencies through phone calls, video chats, emails, texts, Facebook and posting letters. We also called to our families to say a socially distanced hello, to check in and deliver some essential food hampers. Our message was to remind families that they were not alone and that we were all in this together. We also made contact and visited older members of the community to ensure they were OK and had enough essentials. We had fresh readymade meals delivered weekly to all our families, children and older people and this was greatly appreciated by all. We also ordered food hampers from SuperValu which were delivered to the Community by our staff and SuperValu. Children were sent activity packs each week, which both they and their parents looked forward to! This allowed engagement with families to occur and provided a link for the children to their activities in the crèche. Our crèche is an important community service which has made positive contributions to the growth and confidence of The Glen. We hope to continue to make a valuable contribution to the area.

**We will always strive to provide support to all our families – seeing our children play, make friends and be happy in crèche drives us to continue to provide high quality childcare for all children in our area as we look forward to the year ahead!**

# YMCA

PAKT(Parents and Kids Together) is a community-based family support programme. It involves children (aged 6-16 approx.) and their families in a range of developmental and support activities through its children and youth work programme as well as our parent support programme.

PAKT works with the whole family to support young people to gain the assets they need to be resilient in the face of life's challenges.

As Ireland entered into the first lockdown in March 2020, our PAKT programme in Cork had to quickly adapt to the new reality. Like everyone, we didn't know what to expect but we wholeheartedly agreed with the YMCA's pledge:

"No matter what comes in the days and weeks ahead, we will work to support young people, their families and communities"

As a team we decided to attempt to keep running our weekly youth and children's groups online including our six PAKT clubs, two Bridge groups and a Teen group. This was a steep learning curve negotiating a new online forum, new areas of online consent, assisting families to participate remotely and trying to plan ideas and activities that can work in the online groups!



## **The following are some of the ways YMCA have tried to respond positively and effectively throughout this challenging year:**

- During the two lockdown periods in 2020 youth workers have prepared and facilitated 124 online groups. The online clubs started during the last week in March, and we were amazed at how well the children and young people adapted to the change, and how they were often more comfortable using the online platform than we were! It was encouraging to realize how much we could do online, from interactive games to cooking and baking, talent shows, exercising together and many 'show and tell' sessions with pets, favourite toys and favourite places to chill out. Our international volunteer Ann-Cathrin had to return home to Germany at the start of the lockdown, but was able to join in the online clubs from home, which the children were delighted about.
- Throughout the two lockdown periods in 2020 youth workers have prepared and delivered over 180 parcels and packages for families at three separate times in the year with activity materials to accompany the online sessions as well as books, treats and special messages to parents and children inside. The youth workers then had the privilege of delivering the packages to families and feeling a little bit like Santa! The package deliveries were such a lovely way to connect with parents and children while social distancing, at a time that was stressful and challenging for everyone.
- Youth workers sent out weekly text messages inviting children to sessions, outlining activities and providing technical support to parents.
- It felt particularly important to keep the Bridge group (designed for 6th class students preparing and moving to secondary school) going through the lockdown, as the already challenging transition from primary to secondary school was made even more difficult by the unusual circumstances. The participants missed out on important preparation time they would have had in school and many of the usual end of year celebrations. In our Bridge online groups we had fun playing games, baking and chatting, and also talked about topics such as the importance of a good daily routine during lockdown, and identified what helps each individual cope during stressful times. A highlight for The Bridge in June was a visit to our online club from a mentor for first year students in a local secondary school. She gave valuable advice and reassurance, and answered lots of questions about starting in first year in September.
- We were thankful for the opportunity to bring the older participants in our groups on a trip to Zip-It park in Farran Woods this summer as this was an important opportunity for us to all actually meet outdoors in a safe and fun environment!
- We have been able to carry out direct/face to face youth and family work in the periods from January to March, and September to the end of October. In the period from September to October we were able to adjust our groups into pods and use all the recommended safety procedures to continue doing face to face work including using a new contact tracing and booking in procedure for families.

# YMCA

## The following are some more of the ways YMCA have tried to respond positively and effectively throughout this challenging year:

- We began a weekly newsletter for families during lockdown periods to help stay in touch and continue building community through sharing news and photos from the online youth groups, organising challenges and sharing resources that were directly useful and relevant to families during this time.
- Our family workers got in touch with all the families directly by phone alongside a weekly text, to see how they were and often we found that there was great openness over the phone. This was a great link to encourage the children to take part in the online work and also to support and signpost parents who needed to talk or seek advice.
- One of our most exciting innovations throughout this time was when we identified the potential for an interactive online parenting support course so we developed a six session course for parents focusing on the theme of resilience. It was called 'Coping in Challenging Times: helping children to grow and thrive'. (Copy of the advert attached) We decided to advertise this widely and were surprised to find that over 200 people signed up! The course ran May-June 2020 while children were home during lockdown and over 70 people attended regularly. It was a great experience for all involved and so successful that we decided to do a re-run in November 2020 where we have over 75 attendees once again.
- The family workers have continued to support Meitheal processes during lockdown via phone calls, conference calls, video calls and some one to one meetings.
- The demand for one to one parent support work as well as participation in children's groups has grown during this time. Referrals are now coming in through schools, local community services, social workers and CFSN networks. This is in part due to the ground work begun last year in Ballincollig, Blarney and continued in Cobh and the raised awareness of our service.
- Networks are beginning to strengthen in Ballincollig due to additional staff in place in the local family support centre and the positive linkages through the CFSN. The YMCA is now part of a youth sub group working together with three other organisations to target the identified needs of children and youth in the area. Through this network we have applied to 'The Wheel' funding and been successful in receiving funding for further Parents Plus training for staff.

## Quotes from the children:

*"I loved the online groups as I got to see my friends"*

*"The online groups made a difference during lockdown because it made Wednesdays fun and I had something to look forward to"*

*"If we didn't have online sessions we wouldn't have been able to keep in touch and see each other. I really really liked this"*

## Quotes from the Parents:

*"Thank you so much...this course is amazing...why couldn't I have done it 10 years ago for my first child!"*

*"I feel much more confident as a parent...the sessions made me realise I am not alone and I felt a real connection to all the other parents that were sharing experiences...."*

*"Thank you, it was a fantastic course with great content, amazing work by all. Thank you for the opportunity to be able to do it at a time when it was crucial in everyone's lives during Covid-19"*

The last eight months have been challenging. There are natural limitations of remote working but there have been many positives as well and this experience has given us the courage to continue to seek innovative ways of reaching families who need support. It has been encouraging to see how well we've been able to adapt our work in new circumstances, even seeing new opportunities open up and that the connection with many of the children and families we work with has remained strong. Most of all, it has been amazing to witness the resilience and joy of the children and young people in the middle of many challenges and changes.

# HALLOWEEN FUN AT BARNARDOS SOUTH CORK CITY FAMILY SUPPORT PROJECT

While traditional Trick-or-Treating activities for children and families were cancelled this year due to Level 5 restrictions, the Barnardos South Cork City Family Support Project based in Mahon were anxious to keep the magic and fun of Halloween alive for the many children that we support across Cork City and County. We have grown increasingly aware of the detrimental impact of lockdown restrictions on the vulnerable children and families that we work with and this Halloween we wanted to ensure that families had an opportunity to have fun together and create positive memories for their children despite the difficult times that we are living in. In the lead up to Halloween, the team in Barnardos carefully created Halloween packs for those we work with containing sweets, arts and crafts activities, face paints and the instructions and materials needed for a range of traditional Halloween games and fun including “Bobbing for Apples”, “Snap Apple” and a “Spooky Treasure Hunt”. Once the packs were ready, the team went on to hand deliver these Halloween gifts to the doorsteps of 30 families across Cork City and County and were met with great excitement and appreciation! The children felt so special to receive their individual Halloween pack and to be remembered by their project worker during their “locked down” Mid term break! Since their return to school, we have heard great stories about the fun and games that took place in their homes on the night of All Hallow’s Eve!

**Roisin McDaid (Project Leader)**  
**Barnardos South Cork City**



# CLOYNE DIOCESAN YOUTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES LTD.

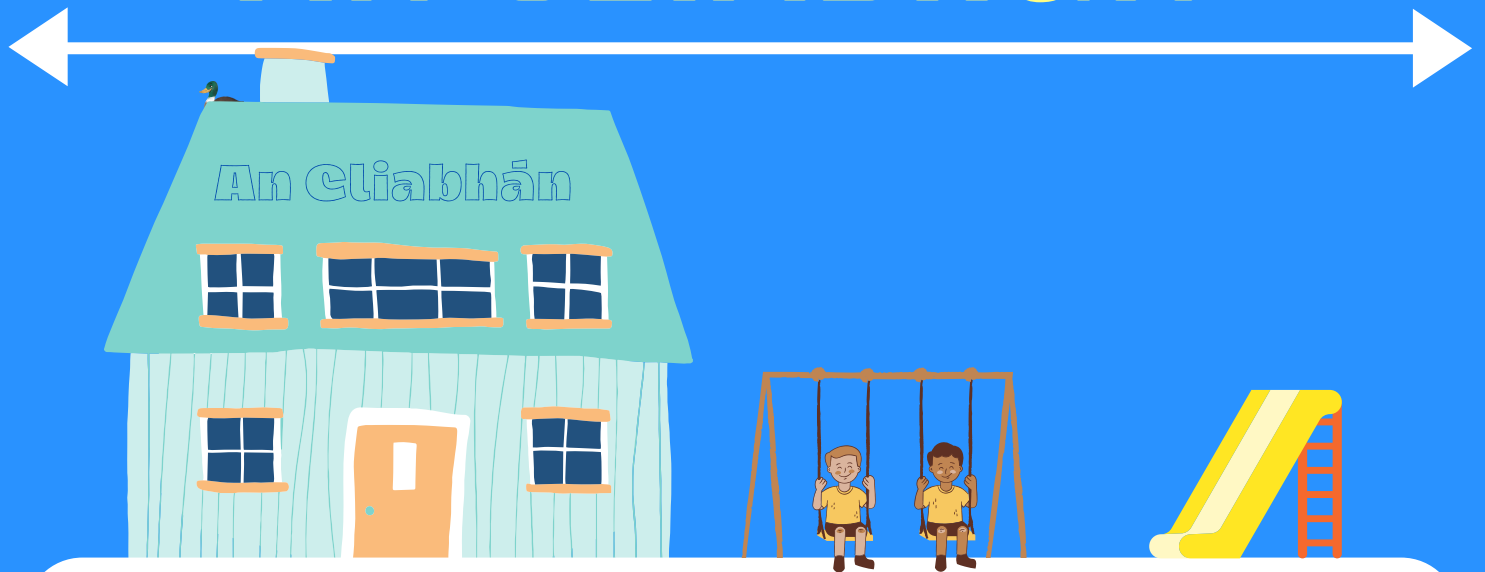


**2020** has proven to be an exceptionally hard year for all of us who operate in the Community and Voluntary Sector. CDYS staff and volunteers like so many responded to the challenges that Covid 19 brought, with imagination, bravery and a firm commitment to keep the needs of vulnerable children, young people and families front and centre. Our support services were refocused to take into account the restrictions imposed by lockdown and at various levels since. Our staff and volunteers showed considerable resilience in how they supported people through digital platforms and creative means. They also ensured that for those who needed face to face contact, practical support with food, care and activity packs, supports with IT equipment or the basic human need to see and talk to someone, that they were there without question. We instituted garden conversations, park meetings, and a range of other initiatives that kept the most vulnerable connected, talking and working through these difficult times. In the towns and environs of Mallow, Charleville, Mitchelstown, Fermoy, Middleton, Cobh, Macroom and the wider North and East Cork area you will still find CDYS staff and volunteers supporting children, young people and families through difficult times with challenges that have taken on much more significance over the last 8 months. All our counselling and therapeutic services, youth and community services, CCA and family support services as well as our detached, educational and outreach programmes all adapted and remain open. Food banks were expanded, IT and phones were made available, we re-imagined how we reach out, support and stay the course with so many people across our communities. We are now seeing the emergence of significance challenges for children, young people and families as a result of Covid 19. We have discovered new ways to do things and have seen recognition that what we do in the Community and Voluntary Sector has greater significance and depth than just the services we deliver. Throughout the challenges presented by Covid 19 it is refreshing to see the acknowledgement by many that it was the Community and Voluntary Sector that had the bravery, vision, appetite and necessary dimensions to its work to be able to respond and adapt. We in CDYS are incredibly proud to be part of that, to continue to play our part in the care and support of the most vulnerable in our communities. I would like to thank our colleagues in the Community and Voluntary Sector and beyond for the continued collaboration and support and to Tusla in Cork for their unwavering commitment and recognition of the necessity, importance and uniqueness that we bring to the lives of so many children, young people and families.

**The people of CDYS and within the wider Community and Voluntary Sector have shown immense bravery in how they cared and continue to care and support children, young people and families; a bravery we will carry into 2021 and beyond.**

**Brian Williams CDYS**

# AN CLIABHÁN



An Cliabhán have engaged in the Community Childcare Alternative Programme since its inception and have found it to be hugely beneficial for families as it works from a community development perspective with a whole family approach. The family unit can comprise of many elements that prove challenging for those of us that work around Family support. These elements of daily routines that are part and parcel of life for specific families may also contradict what the experts tell us are essential for transitions for family members to fit into what we perceive as \*normal\*. Our work involves having a starting point where the family and the Family Social Worker can start the process of engagement with support from us here sometimes acting as a buffer and sometimes as a mediator. As a community-based programme, we believe in starting from a non-judgmental perspective, try to set realistic and achievable joint goals and be prepared to explore innovative and unusual interventions. All families have assets, and we endeavour to catch the good even when there are obstacles in finding these and identifying the strengths of individual family members and supporting them to enhance these, while drawing on community supports. Building trust, bond of attachment and developing a schema that will work with their individual needs within the family structure is important. In my work with families I respect differences, family's attitudes to child rearing, division of family roles according to gender and age. Respect based partnership with parents and carers is the key, which means deeply engaging with parents while maintaining a child centred approach, in practice this promotes diversity and inclusion. This also involves sharing of information, skills, decision making, responsibility and accountability so that families are supported to develop and sustain their own strengths. Throughout the lockdown back in March and the current phase Families have been actively involved in a variety of Creche Programs that support their evolving partnership with parents' approach. Children actively engage in Reading programmes, visits to the local library, Tory Top Road park and other local amenities. They become familiar with their community surrounding areas and develop a sense of identity and belonging. It is also a start to actively engaging parents in their community and a shared sense of identity. Our photographs demonstrate our commitment to involving the children in the An Cliabhán and Cork City Library program \*Reds Reading Program\* one of the many activities that children and families enjoy, fostering their love of books and reading. The CDP and An Cliabhán community Creche are actively involved with Healthy Cities, Cork City Council \*Back to School Packs\*, visits from our own Community Guards, Feed Cork, HSE community and Mental health supports and Tusla Child and Family Agency and their Team here in South Lee. Every picture tells its own story, we are delighted to share our CV 19 journey with you all. One of the main successful elements and work of Family Support within community organizations is the strength in its contacts, willingness, and openness of several community professionals. These foster enhanced elements of good will and a belief that we are all Family who at times of crises need supports within our community. It is our belief that Community Childcare Alternative is a really positive intervention for families in crisis when much of traditional social work avenues have been exhausted because it helps to re-set the relationships within families, between families and social workers and site these effectively within a community context.

**We are a Community Based Childcare Care and Education centre, we believe that our partnership with parents is the key to our progress, as parents are the primary educators, and the child is central to all our work and we strive to embrace the family in its entirety.**

# YAP

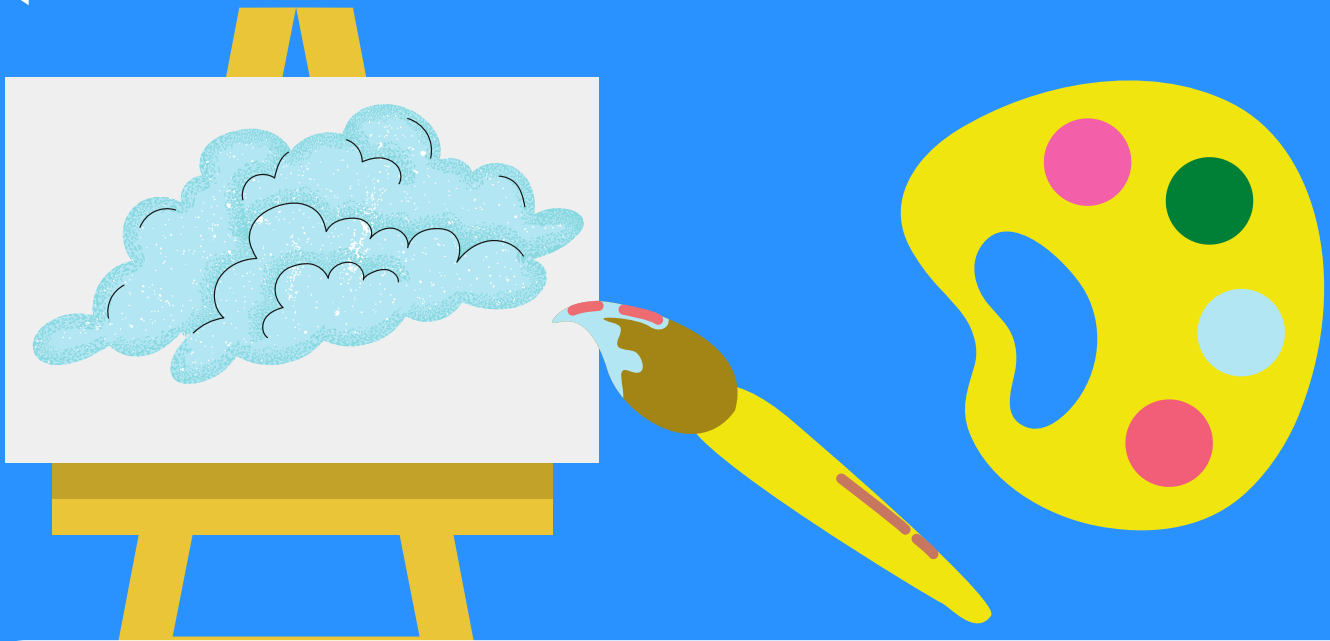


YAP's Family Support Service in Cork has been very successful this year, with our advocates carrying out individual targeted pieces of work with each member of the family in line with their individualized Service Plans. The B family have seen great outcomes over the course of their YAP programme. In the past the family had struggled with interventions with professionals and services, often disengaging very quickly. The YAP advocate worked with mum and her two teenagers, other siblings had been placed in care and there was a risk of both young people also going into care. Despite Covid 19 restrictions, this case was able to begin early on during the lockdown, the advocate worked collaboratively with the family to build trusting relationships over 15 hours per week.

Interventions included supporting mum to re-engage with counselling services and one sibling to attend community personal training to aid him with achieving a healthy and active lifestyle. This something that this young person had been struggling with, leading to weight gain and a sedentary lifestyle. This lifestyle and isolation had begun to impact his confidence and in turn had led to school refusal. However, since working with the advocate the young person is now healthier, happier, more confident and has returned to school. The other young person struggled to engage with their advocate and would refuse to leave their bedroom for any reason only to eat, since working with the advocate the young person will now leave the home with the advocate and his mother. This young person has also begun to learn skills such as cooking and baking and with the support of the advocate is working through his anxiety in the hope of returning to school. Through the trusting relationship with the advocate and the YAP wraparound approach this family now are open to the support of their social worker and are working well with the home school liaison officer within the school.

Another success story that comes to mind during 2020 was of that of young man A. A was referred to us through our Intensive Support Programme. A was facing numerous charges for theft and anti-social behaviour in the community, to the point where those in A's life including his social worker were concerned that the next step for A would be admission to Oberstown Detention Centre. A had also dropped out of school and this had caused A and his father's relationship to deteriorate. Since building a trusting and supporting relationship with the advocate A has completely turned his life around. A completed his Leaving Certificate and progressed onto a PLC course. A is also now linked with a local soccer club, which he has shown tremendous talent. A is very dedicated to soccer and states that he dreams one day of playing for the Irish Team. A has shown great commitment to soccer and never misses training or a match. The advocate has also supported A to improve and navigate his relationship with his father, to the point where now his father states that he is beginning to trust A again and they now have learned new coping mechanisms that allow them to cope with conflict. Through YAP's Urgent Technology Assistance Fund, we were able to purchase A a laptop so he can continue his college course during periods of lockdown. The cherry on the cake for A came during his last court appearance when the judge recognized the hard work and changes A had made in his life and was given a second chance, not remanded to Oberstown but given a year suspended sentence. This was a huge relief for A and his family and he felt that the changes he had made had paid off and his he is now committed to progressing his aspirations for the future.

# BLUE SKIES THINKING HELPS ART FLOURISH DURING COVID-19 AT DUNMANWAY



Accepting the trials posed by the COVID-19 Pandemic, in the Dunmanway Family Resource Centre we have had to be creative about finding alternative ways to support families in the community. We have adapted many new ways of engaging with people, but we want to mention one initiative which was a direct response to the challenges. While our experience of virtual platforms was hitherto very limited, we are now becoming adept at using Zoom and others! One of our regular facilitators, Marika O Sullivan, who is also an Art Therapist, put together an online Art Course which ran for 8 weeks through April and May. Our Family Support Worker reached out to people in our network to let them know about the course, and then set the course up in a way that was 'user friendly' demystifying the new online format. Most of the participants did not have previous experience of online courses or platforms, so our Family Support Worker had to guide them through the set-up processes and was present throughout the course to ensure that everything stayed on-track digitally and that everyone was comfortable with their involvement. The course was an unreserved success and is now being rolled out again with a wider range of participants.

In speaking afterwards with Marika about her own experience, she observed that participants really reached out to each other during the course, and offered help and support in so many ways to each other. One participant expressed that she had felt isolated and nervous, but found that the shared experience helped her to feel connected and involved in a way that was really positive for her. While virtual teaching presented some challenges to Marika – not least the intermittent quality of some people's broadband – which everyone managed to overcome – and the inability to read people's body language at times, she stated that the benefits far outweighed these problems. One considerable benefit was the fact that people who have no transport or mobility issues and who may not have previously been able to get involved, were now able to participate. While virtual courses can never fully replace face-to-face contact, they are now going to be part of the long-term planning for activities offered by Dunmanway Family Resource Centre as we realise the positive effect from participants' responses.

**Rita Kearney**