



**ST STEPHEN'S GREEN TRUST
DIRECT PROVISION CENTRE
GRANT PROGRAMME**

IMPACT REPORT 2016

"I now have something to say to my friends during catch up time in the class... when my friends are talking about winning a match, I can talk about my games too."

Orla O'Neill, St Stephen's Green Trust
June 2016



St Stephen's Green Trust

Direct Provision Centre Grant Programme

1. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This impact report is part of the St Stephen's Green Trust commitment to reflect on its programmes, listen to its stakeholders and be accountable to its funders. We want to demonstrate what works and assist our funded organisations to make a difference in the lives of children and families living in Direct Provision. We hope to use the information in a strategic way to support beneficial change.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE PROGRAMME

Following a review of its grant-making in 2014 by Brian Harvey, St Stephen's Green Trust developed a Strategic Plan 2014-2018. The scoping of current and emerging need carried out by Brian Harvey identified asylum seeker families and children living under Direct Provision as one of the most vulnerable groups in Ireland at risk of poverty and social exclusion.¹ Some of the references in the report include:

“Some parts of the new communities are at especial risk (of poverty), such as those in direct provision, the trafficked and the Roma community.....Overall, the most vulnerable category is the asylum-seeker placed in direct provision.....Direct provision may be a contributor to the unusually high number of African children the subject of childcare orders.”

During summer 2014 the Trust entered an information gathering and research phase which sought the views of organisations working in the field, people living in Direct Provision and other funders.

Anecdotal information gathered from the research phase suggested that families had little or no funding to put towards activities that children normally engage in, such as paying for sports club fees, swimming lessons or camps during school holidays. Since the recession, voluntary organisations working with children and families in Direct Provision Centres (DPCs) have had no funding to provide these activities. On two occasions, it was reported that children were left in school classrooms while their peers engaged in swimming lessons. Schools generally require parents to pay for these lessons and the DP children's allowance of €9.60 per week could not cover the cost. Organisations said there was little or no opportunity for children to engage with their peers outside of school time, they could not or were reluctant to invite friends to the Centre or the Centre was so geographically isolated that lack of transport mitigated against integration.

¹ The Brian Harvey SSGT Review is available on the Trust website at ssgt.ie.

3. WHAT DID WE DO TO ADDRESS THE ISSUES?

Following the consultation period, the Trust decided to allocate a sum of €50,000 per annum for two years to support activities for children living in Direct Provision. The funds for this grant programme came through donations from the Discalced Carmelites and the Daughters of the Cross Investment Fund.

The grant programme criteria focused on sporting, cultural and community activities available locally and which allowed the children to leave the Centre for a few hours each week. Because of the small size of the fund, only the direct activities could be funded.

A scoping exercise was carried out to determine what voluntary organisations were working with children and families in the 25 family DPCs scattered throughout the country. The supporting organisations ranged from small, volunteer-led groups without offices or paid staff to small or medium sized voluntary organisations to local development companies. We were unable to identify organisations willing to administer the fund for several DPCs.

Although the Trust tried to design a grant programme which took account of the size and capacity of the voluntary organisations involved and the changing situation within DPCs, the grant criteria were quite specific and a minimum level of governance was required:

DPC Grant Programme Criteria

The SSGT Direct Provision Centre Grant Programme aims to give an opportunity to parents/carers of children in accommodation centres to decide what activities will benefit their children and to apply for funding for them. It is envisaged these activities will avail of sporting, community and arts facilities in the areas in which they live.

- The funded activities should increase the children's opportunities to integrate with their community and improve their quality of life.
- The funding should not replace funding for activities already provided by voluntary organisations and DPCs to residents.
- One application only will be accepted from each Centre, but it may include several activities to be funded, depending on the interests of the children, age group etc.
- We envisage funding is only available to fund one activity per child for a period of time.
- Priority will be given to Centres which are geographically isolated and/or don't have many organisations supporting residents with activities which allow integration into their community.
- We will be flexible in our approach to the financial support needed to allow children to access the sporting, community and arts facilities in their community, but will look for activities which provide value-for-money and use local voluntary effort.

We asked that organisations follow a particular process to ensure parents and children had an opportunity to be part of the decision making process around what activities became part of the application. As with all other SSGT programmes, a grant report was required after the money had been spent. We asked organisations to keep receipts but didn't require copies to be sent to us.

3.1 First Round: September 2014

The first call for applications was made in September 2014 and grants were paid in December, with activities generally starting in January 2015. €55,960 was allocated to 16 organisations applying for 18 Direct Provision Centres for activities such as swimming lessons, football clubs, dance lessons, gymnastics, athletics and music. In most cases the grants covered activities for six months.

After the Trust received the first round applications the extent of the need became clear. It was fortuitous an opportunity arose to partner with the Mercy (Southern Province) Solidarity Trust which had a similar grants focus area and approach. They contributed €24,000 for grants to the 10 DPCs in their area.



Following this first phase of grant allocation, we became aware the €50,000 fund available through the Trust and the additional grant from the Mercy Solidarity Trust would only cover activities for children for approximately six months. Organisations said parents and children were anxious to continue the activities they had started so it was deemed important to maintain some continuity.

Given the success of the collaboration with the Mercy Southern Province, we decided to approach the three other Mercy Provinces to ask whether they might be interested in partnering with the Trust to support the Centres in their area.

3.2 Second Round: February 2015

The three Mercy Provinces responded positively to the request for additional funds to supplement the SSGT grant and therefore the Trust was able to open a second grant round in spring 2015. Sixteen Centres received €52,780 in grants to continue activities started or to try new activities. One new organisation applied in this round and some organisations did not apply for a second round as they still had funds left from the first. More organisations requested funds this time for Summer Camps as they would be the only opportunity children had to leave the Centre during the long summer period when schools were closed.

Sisters of Mercy (Western Province) contributed €8,000 for the four Centres in their area (Sligo, Ballyhaunis, Galway and Athlone); Sisters of Mercy (South Central Province) contributed €5,600 for the 3 Centres in their area (Newbridge, Clondalkin and Limerick) and Sisters of Mercy (Northern Province) gave €12,000 towards the Mosney and Monaghan DPCs which are in their geographical area.

3.3 Third Round: September 2015

A third grant round was opened in Sept 2016 and a further €29,865 was allocated by year end. At this stage, organisations were spending their grants at different paces and some groups were reporting a delay in spending funds for a variety of reasons. This included children leaving the DPCs as a result of their families getting refugee status, leave to remain or supplementary protection.

Sisters of Mercy (Southern Province) contributed a further €15,000 towards this grant round in 2015.

3.4 2016: A Rolling Fund

Since December 2015 the Trust has endeavoured to respond flexibly to organisations' specific timelines. Many of the challenges being faced by organisations working in DPCs are outlined in the next section. It was decided a rolling fund would operate to the end of 2016 during which the impact of the programme would be evaluated and a decision made around its future. Between January and March 2016 a further €8,494 was allocated to five organisations. The total fund spent to date is €147,000 and grants are listed below.

3.5 Current Situation

Initially the Trust agreed to allocate €50,000 pa for two years (2014-2015) towards the grant programme and this has now extended to a third year. The €150,000 grant fund from the Trust is added to the €64,600 donations from the Sisters of Mercy to give a total fund of €215,000 of which €147,000 has been spent to March 2016. If the Trust is to continue to fund the grants programme to December 2016 without a break in activities, further donations will be required to add to the current fund balance of €67,600.

Over the past nine months there has been an increase in the number of asylum seekers who have been granted refugee status, leave to remain or subsidiary protection, particularly those who have been in the system over five years. Many have moved out of the Direct Provision Centres with little or no support available to integrate into the community, set up house or find employment. Many others cannot yet move out due to the housing crisis which exists all over Ireland. However there has not been a corresponding reduction in the need for the grant programme as local organisations are reporting new families moving in to the Centres. The constant flux makes it difficult for organisations to administer the grant programme according to our guidelines. Many organisations report increased pressure and activity as they seek to support people in transition from Direct Provision as well as welcome and supporting new DP residents.

4. WHAT DID WE ACHIEVE?

By January 2016 all organisations had spent the first two grants given (December 2014 and March 2015) so a request was made for grant reports. The Trust looked for an account of activities undertaken, the cost and whether that differed to the original application. We wanted to learn from the experiences of the organisations.

The Grant Report also requested some qualitative information – what were the positive outcomes, what were the challenges, were there any unexpected results?

As the capacity of funded organisations ranged widely some groups reported in more detail than others. However, the presence of paid staff in an organisation was not necessarily an indicator of the quality of the grant report. In fact the grant reports which proved most problematic to obtain were all from organisations with paid staff. Of particular current difficulty seems to be the diversion of staff time in local development companies to other target areas with little or no time allowed for support of people living in Direct Provision. Some of these staff members reported carrying out support activities in their own time.



4.1 General Outcomes from the Grant Reports

The total grant-aid of €150,000 has benefitted almost 620 children, some of whom took part in two or more activities, depending on how far the voluntary organisations could stretch the grant.

A summary of beneficial outcomes include:

- The type of activities were broadly similar across all of the 18 Centres funded, with swimming being the most popular. Most other activities were also in the sports area and included: football; athletics; gymnastics; dancing; karate and basketball.
- On several occasions, groups reported GAA or soccer clubs actively seeking to retain boys who started in the Clubs because of the grant activity. These Clubs became proactive in organising lifts to the Club for the children, providing clothing or waiving Club fees when these proved problematic.

- Other popular activities were music, drama, dancing and summer/easter camps.
- Scouts groups came in for particular praise as being very accommodating and offering free places in some cases.
- Because many of the activities involving Clubs meant the children participated in St Patrick's Day or other parades, their visibility and profile within the community was raised which was cited as beneficial by organisations.
- The process of taking part in activities as a group strengthened relationships among children within the Centre also.
- Parents reported a sense of achievement that they could provide some activities for the children similar to their school peers.
- The focus on grants having to be spent on activities outside of the Centre meant organisations had to collaborate with external community organisations, sometimes for the first time. This has led to partnerships which have endured past the grant period and leveraged other resources for the children – they are now included as a normal target group for the organisation.
- One organisation said a very beneficial relationship was forged with a local youth organisation and which was generated as a direct result of the SSGT grant.
- Because funded organisations had some funds with which to approach sporting and other community or commercial services they succeeded in getting significant discounts or free places which allowed the grant to stretch beyond what was initially envisaged.
- Similarly, because of the available funds groups were able to leverage support from some Centre managers who supplemented the activities through active cooperation, supplying extra transport and so on. This did not happen in all cases.
- Some of the activities required parents to accompany their children (eg swimming) and one organisation said it was the first time this had happened. Prior to this, activities involving the children had taken place within the Centre or children went on outings without parents.
- Almost all organisations reported an increase in the self-esteem of children because they could take part in the same activities as their peers. In some cases this was also reported for the parents.



- One organisation said the grant allowed the children to pay for school swimming and accompany their peers instead of the previous situation where they were left sitting in the classroom.
- The physical nature of most activities was cited as being of particular benefit, particularly in Centres where there were poor facilities for external play or recreation.
- Organisations using paid staff and organisations using volunteers were equally creative in leveraging more resources to get best value from the grant. Organisations with paid staff seemed to be particularly successful in engaging other community organisations to work with asylum seeker children as part of their core activities. This may be due to being linked into networks and knowing how to approach the organisations.

“I LOVE the Cúl Camp and I now have a kit like all my friends at school.....I love getting away from the centre in the holidays to meet my friends.....I feel just like my school friends going to summer camps, it is great”

4.2 Challenges in the Grant Programme

There were several types of challenges experienced in administering the grant programme. Some applicant organisations had difficulty in relation to the grant criteria, had problems engaging parents or found it hard to manage the implementation of the intended activities. The Trust had some difficulty in being able to administer the Grant Programme in a consistent manner which also allowed necessary flexibility.

Challenges for grantee organisations included:

- Almost all organisations said the lack of affordable transport solutions to get children to activities was the single biggest obstacle in administering the grant. This was magnified where Centres were geographically isolated or located in small towns. In several cases it stopped the children from taking part in activities. Because the grant size was relatively small, in most cases it could not stretch to buses or taxis. Sometimes the situation was ameliorated because of relationships built with Club members or organisers and lifts were organised. In at least one other case the Centre manager agreed to put on extra transport to allow the children get to activities.
- Because the grants were only for the direct costs of activities, several organisations reported an administrative burden and ancillary costs (telephone, postage etc) which they could not recoup through the grant. In cases where this meant the grant could not be administered, a small administration amount was allowed as part of the application. It is worth noting that one HSE region seems to have funded hours for development workers to support families living in Direct Provision. This has made a difference in their ability to administer the grant. This is notably different to other regions where the local Development Company had supported families up to last year but no longer were able to do so. The need to have a

consistent approach to support for families living in Direct Provision throughout the country was highlighted on several occasions.

- The process of applying for the grant meant organisations needed to ask parents and children what activities they wanted to pursue. These ranged from family to family and child to child depending on interests and age. Organisations then had to research what was available in the community and at what cost. Following this they had to organise activities which met most need. This issue was most problematic in the first grant round as organisations had to spend time researching the information. It settled down somewhat over the next two grant rounds as many children continued the same activity.
- Because the Trust knew the extent of the eligible Centres, we were proactive in seeking organisations to make applications for family DPCs which hadn't applied. This was successful in one case but not in two cases. One of the unsuccessful cases involved a local development company whose staff declined to engage citing lack of hours to engage with the Centre as being the reason. In another unsuccessful case the voluntary organisation said they

"Since starting the swimming, we in (organisation) have noticed a vast improvement in the children's social skills and how they interact with the wider public....when they come back they feel relaxed and they sleep and they make new friends....my boy has a friend in (leisure centre) because of swimming they went to".

felt the process of trying to get parents/children to agree on a few activities which they would all partake in would be problematic and lead to relationship difficulties in the Centre. They also said they had a different role in the Centre (dealing with asylum applications) and did not have the capacity to organise children's activities.

- Some of the larger DPCs have difficulty in sourcing activities outside the Centre because of the number of children relative to the size of their nearest town. One large Centre said they could not pursue the activity identified by several children because the local group said the number was too high. Rather than choose a few children who could take up the places, they decided not to pursue the activity.
- Some organisations asked for flexibility to provide in-Centre activities as they had no success in sourcing activities outside the Centre due to various issues outlined above. Although the Trust maintains its overall objective of funding activities which involve the children leaving the Centre, it allowed this flexibility rather than a situation whereby the children got no access to activities.
- The movement of families in and out of Centres and the disruption this has on planned activities was outlined by several organisations. A fairly flexible approach is needed therefore to allow new situations to be taken into account.

5. HOW DO WE KNOW WE MADE A DIFFERENCE?

It can be difficult to measure impact and for this report the measurement tools were proportionate to the relatively small size of the grants. Feedback from the funded organisations was the main source of information and this was supplemented by telephone calls with most organisations and site visits to two Centres in Munster. Given the number of challenges and suggestions for the future which organisations gave in their feedback, it is reasonable to conclude we got honest opinions.

The organisational feedback and comments from children and parents would suggest the grants had a beneficial impact on the lives of the children. The increase in self-esteem among children and parents is difficult

to quantify. In many cases the grants had an impact beyond the monetary amount. The funds were stretched in several ways – using the money available as leverage to get discounts, free places and additional support from Centre managers etc. Furthermore the engagement with local community organisations has led to beneficial outcomes for future working in some Centres and this may increase as the grant programme continues.

The grant programme was implemented to address an identified and unmet need. The plight of children living in Direct Provision has been well researched documented and the long term solution is to ensure children do not end up living in these Centres or do not end up living there for years. In the meantime the children will continue to experience the ill effects of their situation. Although the DP children's allowance was increased from €9.60 to €15.60 per week in January

"I feel good and proud that he can do something outside of the hostel. He wants to go again and wear his rugby gear". Rugbytots. "The girls loved it and always counted the days before swimming. I liked it because they were learning with other children". Swimming lessons. "He was happy and it makes a difference that he can go with his school". Swimming with his class mates.

2016, this is still not sufficient to allow children to take part in activities funded by the Trust as there are many more immediate needs such as clothes and school supplies.

Providing the means for children to undertake extracurricular activities is a small part of the overall picture. The children's quality of life will also be affected by



the quality of their accommodation and its management, the capacity of their care-givers, the location of the Centre and the actions of many other stakeholders.

6. FUTURE CHALLENGES AND HOW TO PROCEED

Because the grant programme has demonstrated beneficial impact on the lives of children the next step is to determine if the activities should be continued and if so, how the work can be mainstreamed.

Current information is that the average number of years children remain in DPCs continues to be high, despite an increase in the number who have received status. All organisations report the Centres are filling up again with children as families are dispersed from the Baleskin reception centre in Finglas.

The Trust invited organisations to give their feedback on grant criteria and processes and comments included:

- Extend eligible activities to family events and outings – find a mechanism for allowing the costs of parents accompanying their children on outings and activities, making for a more normal family environment.
- Include activities for adults as they too experience the ill effects of poverty living in DPCs.
- Allow applicant organisations to include the administration costs of running the activities.

Some of the suggestions are being incorporated into the programme but the ability to extend the programme or change criteria will be limited by the size of the grant fund and the capacity of the Trust to administer it. SSGT intends to continue the programme at least until the end of 2016. Future grantrounds will be dependent on funding, feedback from grants given in 2016 and the situation of children living in Direct Provision Centres.

Parents and children requested for a long time to have a day at the beach, but couldn't be organised before due to the lack of funding. This day was the most fantastic day I witnessed in my work with children in DP centres. Their joy was amazing and besides playing for the full day in the sun, they eat African food prepared by their mothers and joined the queue at the ice-cream van.

The next phase of feedback from grant-aided organisations will include their opinion on how the outcomes could be mainstreamed. In addition, the views of other stakeholders will be sought to determine what options there are for continuing the activities into the medium term assuming people's situations remain the same.

Organisations funded between November 2014 and March 2016

Organisation	Direct Provision Centre	Amount €
1. Clonakilty Friends of Asylum Seekers	Clonakilty Lodge	5,200
2. Cork City Partnership	Kinsale Road Accommodation Centre	10,840
3. Croi na Gaillimhe	Eglinton, Salthill	13,885
4. Cultur, Meath	Mosney Accommodation Centre	11,000
5. Diversity Sligo	Globe House, Chapel Hill, Sligo	4,520
6. Doras Luimni	Knockalisheen Accommodation Centre	6,256
7. Integrate Carrick	Bridgewater House, Carrick on Suir	4,780
8. Integration and Support Unit	Atlantic House, Tramore	2,140
9. Integration and Support Unit	Ocean View House, Tramore	4,018
10. Killarney Asylum Seekers Initiative	Atlas House, Killarney	2,400
11. Killarney Asylum Seekers Initiative	Drishane Castle Millstreet	4,750
12. Mayo Intercultural Action	The Old Convent, Ballyhaunis	5,550
13. Monaghan Immigrant Support Group	St Patricks Accommodation Centre	16,000
14. Newbridge Asylum Seekers Support Group	Eyre Powell Newbridge	1,600
15. South Dublin County Partnership	Tower Accommodation Centre	8,716
16. Tralee International Resource Centre	Johnston Marina Hotel	7,876
17. Wallaroo Playschool Child & Family Project	Ashbourne House, Glounthaune	7,690
18. Waterford Immigration Network	Birchwood House, Ballytruckle	11,178
19. Westmeath Community Development	Athlone Accommodation Centre	18,700
	TOTAL	147,099

St Stephen's Green Trust

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