

ANNUAL REPORT 2015/2016



Macroon

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE



Chairpersons Address / Organisational Overview



February 2016

Macrooom FRC celebrated our 10th Birthday on the 6th of September 2015. Our celebration served to remind us of how many friends we have in the Macrooom area and indeed how much water has passed under the bridges since we opened our doors in 2005. Most of all the celebration reinforced for us how worthwhile our initial efforts were when we began to meet in the late nineties to discuss Community needs and, how much our Centre is now part of the fabric of Macrooom. Sometimes we need to remind ourselves why we do Voluntary work and what we get from it. The point is that if we don't acknowledge our contribution, no body else will.

So here it is:

Well done to all who have contributed to making Macrooom FRC the Community Pillar that it has become in Macrooom!

Well done to our Volunteers, our Staff, our Funders and our Service Users!

Our Thoughts

In a recent conversation that I had with our Manager, Seamus O Leary, we discussed the state of Macrooom from a Community perspective and of course what challenges face us over the coming years. This conversation is the main theme of the content of this overview and whereas it is merely our opinion, it has to be as valid as any other at a time when Community, as we knew it, has ceased to be and its replacement is unclear, unstructured and currently toothless.

- We thought that surviving the past seven years was a major achievement and that when we were through the crisis of the national finances things would get better. Unfortunately we underestimated the damage done to the voluntary sector, not just in the past seven years but prior to this when voluntary effort was paid off and professionalised. So it's not a case of "get up and go again", but rather it's about learning to walk all over again. Not too much different from the mid seventies when the Voluntary sector began to assert itself.
- In the case of Macrooom, where volunteers worked at specific areas of need such as "the elderly or disability" and where Community Development was never a well established science, we lost a key connection to local decision making when we lost the Town Council. Often criticised but very much a body who were committed to Macrooom and where the decision makers were accessible, the loss of Macrooom Town Council has been a setback to our development.
- Regulation has been introduced into numerous aspects of society in Ireland, primarily as a result of the abuse of powers and public funds over a long period of time and our National inability to self regulate professions and sectors. The impact of "Regulation" on the "Innocence" has been profound. And the jury is still out on the overall positive success of this approach to cleaning up our act. The impact on Groups like Macrooom FRC and

other Groups in receipt of Public Funds has been immediate and severe.

- The Charities Regulator now insists on knowledge of all aspects of the operation of every charity in the Country. To achieve this we now have a registration system followed up by annual reporting on all activities, finances, volunteer director, staff and meetings. All very welcome when taken in proportion but questionable when the same standards are being imposed on tiny local charities as on the National and multi National operations. The problem for most local charities is in having the skills and resources to remain compliant.
- Regulation has been a part of the Childcare Sector for quite a few years and has contributed slowly to improving the standards of childcare nationally. So why is childcare in Ireland in a crisis?
- It's too expensive for the service users and
- Almost impossible for providers to remain compliant and survive.
- Recent service closures, all over the country demonstrate the imbalance that exists in operating a National Childcare Service.
- In a sector that is dominated by female employees the numbers of new entrants into childcare training has diminished **considerably because it is no longer seen as a progressive career.**
- It is clear to us in Macroom FRC that the reported available funds for the Irish Government over the next five years is insufficient to impact on all sections of Irish society if the approach is to spread it as widely as possible. €8Billion to €10Billion over five years cannot impact equally across society in Ireland. At a time when the Irish electorate has clearly expressed our dissatisfaction with how this country is being managed we would make a few very simple recommendations.

1. Clearly inform the electorate that the available funds are not sufficient to impact across society as a whole





The Bolger Family



The King Family

2. Clearly decide that a small number of the key social problems facing this country will be prioritised and sufficiently resourced towards resolution.

3. Name the priorities clearly and report regularly so that we can all be part of a national effort to addressing high priority areas of need.

Our suggested priority Programmes / approaches for future Governments which would guarantee the respect and ongoing support of our electorate would be to address;

Homelessness: Which is the greatest embarrassment to our society currently and impacting on thousands of Families and Children, to our shame.

Front Line Health Services: Obviously under- funded and badly managed with unclear lines of responsibility and constant avoidance by successive Governments.

Childcare: Which is not affordable for users, not viable for providers and not worthwhile for workers.

Community Supports: Which have diminished beyond recognition over a period 10 years and now cannot play a part in the rebuilding of our National Infrastructure.

I would like, in conclusion, to thank some key contributors to the work of Macroom FRC, without whom I could not effectively operate in my role as Chair.

Our Staff, who ensure the ever present standards of professionalism, quality supports and good humour.

Our Volunteers, who contribute greatly in specific areas of our work and who represent what is special about being part of a Voluntary organisation

My fellow Board Members, who participate fully in the operations of Macroom FRC while in the true traditions of Volunteerism benefiting so little on a personal basis.

Our Manager Seamus O Leary on whom we all depend so much and who plays the ideal link role between the Governance functions and the operations functions of Macroom Family Resource Centre

Olive O Riordan

Olive O Riordan
(Chairperson)

Secretary's Report to Annual General Meeting on Work and Activities

Secretarys' Report

The Board

This report is for a period of 12 months from March 2015 to March 2016.

The Board currently has five Directors which, is in line with our Articles of Association.

The Board has convened for 9 Board Meetings during this period. Our AGM was held on the 11th March 2015.

The Resource Centre

Macroom FRC celebrated our 10th Birthday on the 6th of September 2015, when we hosted a family fun day for current and past Service users along with our neighbours and others from the macroom Community.

Someone was really looking out for us on a day when the sun came out and some 200 visitors enjoyed the games and refreshments, as part of the celebrations.

Our decision to mark this occasion was taken in recognition of the work and effort that has been invested in our Centre over the past 10 years and more by Volunteers, Staff and Service users. We could have chosen to have a much lower key celebration, but this public declaration was just what we and the Community in macroom needed at this time. It provided the required balance between acknowledging the work in the Centre while sharing this with our constituency which is the macroom Community. Well done to all concerned and thank you for your support.

It would be easy to let the past year go by, and take the effort and continued supports to the Macroom Community for granted. In some ways, very little has changed since last year or indeed the year before, i.e.



Gina



Emma



Carmel

- We have continued to provide all of the same services while constantly struggling for space and resources to meet the ever increasing demands.
- We have worked hard at meeting the standards now being imposed on us by Regulatory Bodies such as the Charities Regulator along with the Childcare Inspectorate.
- We have continued to hope that the improvement in the National Finances will eventually impact on Centres like MFRC.
- We continue to be the biggest "small employer" in Macroom with 30 employees and we continuously strive to be a better employer where we are proud of our core standards. This remains a constant dilemma while operating costs are higher than revenue.
- Maintenance and renewals in our Centre are an ever increasing cost to us as we pay the price for usage and aging.
- We have managed to keep all of our existing funders, albeit mostly at reduced levels of funding during 2015.
- We are still working towards the further development of the Centre over the coming years and in particular we hope to make progress on the development of our 1st floor where we have long since identified the need for
 - Counselling facilities
 - Group facilitation
 - Supervised and Unsupervised Access for parents with children
 - Sensory facilities
- We still have planning permission for the development of the 1st Floor in the Centre and we remain hopeful for advancement of this project when resources become.



Face Painting

Core Funding in Macroom FRC

Most of the revenue for Macroom FRC is directly related to our levels of usage, i.e. if a child leaves our Centre the funding for that child in fees or subvention goes as well. The funding that acts as a catalyst for all services in MFRC is what we term as our Core funding. During 2015 this funding came from HSE South and TUSLA. Core funding covers the cost of two part-time positions in Macroom FRC along with some operational cost contribution.

Our Core funding has reduced by almost 20% over the past 8 years which has greatly limited our ability to support new initiatives in relation to Community Supports in recent years. The term threading water comes to mind.

Services in Macroom FRC

Childcare

Macroom FRC are very proud of the suite of childcare supports that we have developed over the past years. Our recent inspection reports are on display in our main reception area along with all of our current policies for inspection by service users and the public in general. We were very satisfied with the compliance levels in our programme as specified in our report even though by its design it does not allow for praise. Any suggestions for improvement were taken on board by our Childcare Management Team and form part of our overall improvement plan for the childcare operation which is ongoing as one would expect from such a service.

We operate an Aistear approach to our childcare programmes.

This approach is our choice out of numerous approaches to childcare as our preferred option. At the core of this approach to childcare children are given appropriate choices in activities at whatever age they are at. We have bedded in this approach through Staff Training and ongoing monitoring of our childcare services. Our overall impression on conducting our own internal reviews has been very positive. At any one time this means that there are numerous activities going on in each room and children participate in the one that appeals to them most. This approach also means that the workload for staff and planning for sessions is far greater. This approach to our childcare reflects our commitment to ongoing improvement in all aspects of our work.

We continue to organise our services to ensure that the space available is used to its optimum. Our numbers of children attending all of our services continues to rise which is a testament to the quality of the service along with the growing demand for childcare in



Emma



Deirdre Rian & Patrick



Fun for all ages



A Handfull for Granda



Kelleher and Cunningham Families

Macroon and surrounding areas.

We work diligently to ensure a compliant, friendly, efficient, cost effective and loving Programme for our Service Users.

Macroon FRC is sanctioned to accommodate for 60 children at any one time. The current trend is for children to attend here for different periods of time and for parts of weeks. While this makes it difficult to organise bookings and roster staff, it does allow us to accommodate during a fiscal year, up to two hundred children, which was the case during 2015.

We work with children with special needs when and if we feel equipped to do so. The varying degrees of need dictate our level of intervention and even though many of our childcare staff are qualified to various levels in special needs work, we do not specialise in this area. Quite often our ability to provide supports is cost related, as the staffing investment in special needs children is far greater than main stream children. This is certainly an area that could benefit from more direct resource investment and from our ongoing experience the local need for such a resource is evident.

For children of pre-school going age we often work with parents in identifying signs of need. This is in the absence of actual assessments of these children within "the system". Our work often supports approaches of parents to the relevant assessment supports especially in light of our daily experience of the children in question. Many however, commence mainstream primary schools without official assessment.

Our next childcare challenge will be to find a way to incorporate the new "Junior Preschool" programme as part of our service. This programme will potentially allow parents to take advantage of free preschool for a second year if taken along with the existing free preschool year.

Our challenge will be to find the space to accommodate this service while continuing to provide the required services to other age groups.

Our additional task will be to provide the required qualified staffing for this service.

Primary, direct and indirect funding for our Childcare programme came from ECCE, CCS & CETS funds from the Department of Children & Youth Affairs through Pobal. We were also supported by the HSE South, Cork North Community Work Department and TUSLA. Our main source of revenue is from our service users by way of childcare fees.

All of our Childcare work is supported by the Cork County Childcare Committee through their Development Worker.

Macroom FRC anticipate that we will be impacted by staffing shortages later in 2016 due to a number of factors, i.e.

- Loss of existing staff as a result of emigration.
- A marked decrease in the availability of qualified childcare workers being trained in our area.
- The increased levels of qualification now being insisted upon along with the poor take-up of places in existing training.
- The poor levels of pay in this sector which is impacting on the numbers of people being attracted to a childcare career.

September 2016 will tell a lot for us in maintain existing services or providing new ones.

Childcare Pricing Policy

28th August 2015 - 26th August 2016

Our Centre operates a core pricing policy of between €4.02 & €5.00 / Hour (or part of) depending on the type of service being availed of in Macroom FRC.

We operate a minimum stay of 3.5 hours policy & all costs are inclusive, i.e. contributions to food and admin are not optional.

We give priority to full-time and regular care over part-time and intermittent care.



Agnieszka



Amanda



Berni

We are now part of the National Childcare Investment Programme whereby service users will be entitled to have child care cost subsidised in line with personal circumstances

Service	Cost per week	Cost per day	Cost per per half-day 5 hours	Cost per 3.5 hour minimum stay
Babies Under 1 year	€210	€45	€25	€20
Wobblers between 1 and 2 years	€210	€45	€25	€20
Toddlers over 2 years of age	€210	€45	€25	€20
After Schools from 1.40pm	€100	€23	N/A	N/A
After Schools 2.40pm & 3pm	€82	€18	N/A	N/A
Pre-school Play-Group (5 sessions per week)	€62.5	€12.5 / Session	N/A	N/A
Only full weeks available.				

Counselling and Family Supports

Counselling, through Macroom FRC is described as a "low cost model" whereby it is charged on an ability to pay basis. Due to the reduced levels of counselling resources available to us in the recent past we have to place more emphasis on the contributions of clients while trying to ensure that no referral is without supports.

Our Counselling Programme is funded by the Child and Family Agency (CFA).

While we are delighted to have continued funding for this programme we are very limited with the levels of intervention and the number of possible sessions on offer for such interventions.



Dylan & Aaron

We continue to cover a range of counselling options, i.e.

- One to one individual counselling
- Relationship / Marriage counselling
- Pre-accredited counselling for those who are willing to accept this
- Rainbows group facilitation for Children who have experienced bereavement
- Play therapy / counselling for some children

Supervised Visitation

This service is totally without resources in the Macroom area.

Despite the growing numbers of court referred cases for access and supervised access nobody has seen fit to specifically allocate funding for this type of service. As a result

many parents in rural areas are forced to use services in Cork City.

We received a much needed contribution of €2350 late in 2014 as a result of numerous letters. Most of our cases come via the courts while there is no actual funding for the service.

Our interventions have proven to be a mixed bag of experiences. By its nature this type of support is provided in an atmosphere which is adversarial and sometimes aggressive. We often question our capacity to effectively manage this service while on the other hand we recognise the positive contribution it makes to children and parents.



Santa Visits Macroom FRC

This service has always tended to take up a disproportional percentage of time and resources. Finding a way to provide such a service in a fashion that is safe and acceptable for all parties to the service provides us with an ongoing challenge. By its very nature this service has tended to involve our Centre in adversarial situations which we have found to be impossible to avoid.

Our challenges have been:

- To encourage parents / guardians to recognise this service as being in the best interest of their child or children, and to encourage them to set aside differences for the period of the access
- To ensure that both parents / guardians respect the neutrality of our Centre in regard to the provision of this service and do not attempt to involve the Centre in actions aimed at gaining retribution against the other party.
- To guarantee a safe environment for the child/children, the visitor and for our staff.

Our approach to this service has been one of constant vigilance and by taking each



Amanda (Leader)



Ann



Claire

situation on its individual merits.

Our investment in the formation of a contract for the services being provided has proven to be the most valuable tool in delivering this service effectively. In most cases there is now a cost involved which we seek to have met by the parties to the access.

Like so many of the supports that we provide this service is in dire need of further development and investment.

Website

www.macroomfrc.com was launched in October of 2009. This was done with the support and professional back-up of "EGG Design" based in Macroom. For newcomers or families thinking of moving to the Macroom area this has proven to be a valuable support and source of contact with our Centre. We have received childcare, counselling and educational enquiries through this medium continuously during 2015. Job enquiries are a regular form of communication to our site.

New and Developing Work

Our Centre fosters and develops many continuous links and relationships into the Macroom Community Infrastructure.

We have worked with existing and longstanding friends while at the same time we have continued to develop and nurture additional contacts and Groups. It is only when we look back over the year that we realise how such relationships creep up on us and before we know it they become part of our developing patchwork of Community Involvement.

Some of our local friends include:

Macroom Rainbows Group: A longstanding friend of macroom FRC, Rainbows facilitated programmes have been practised in Macroom FRC since we opened in 2005. A number of Rainbow modules were operated during 2015, despite the impact of restrictions as a result of the types of groups that are allowable under this programme. We work closely with the local schools and independently as required. In a rural setting such as Macroom, we have found it difficult to put the numbers of children together to allow us to provide this service.

Macroom Bereavement Group: This Group have been active in developing and



Saoirse & Mum



Olive Evelyn Peggy & Hannah

delivering appropriate independent supports in the Macroom area for those who have experienced bereavement. This has included services such as drop-in supports, local meetings and appropriate talks on the subject. We have worked closely with the locally formed Group of Volunteers to clarify and establish Macroom Bereavement Group to a model suitable to local needs.

Grow: The local GROW mental health support group continues to meet in Macroom FRC on a weekly basis. The Group can be contacted through our Centre or through GROW directly. This support operate in a private and low key fashion and provide a local support to members of the Macroom group.

Muskerry Autism Support Group: This Group is predominantly a group of parents of children / adults with Autism. Their work in the Macroom Area has been significant over the past ten years and they continue to provide local supports to families. Macroom FRC is delighted to be associated with this Project and especially as it is the ideal example of the types of partnerships which can be created if the will exists. We are hopeful that future services planned for this Group, will come to fruition during 2015.

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP): Macroom FRC has begun work with SECAD (South & East Cork Area development) during 2015 to explore possible avenues of addressing issues of Social Inclusion in the Macroom area. SECAD are the partnership body who have been tasked with this programme in our area. Ongoing discussions are underway to decide how best to carry out social inclusion work in Macroom. The absence of "follow-up" resources to fund potential work along with the drout in finding new volunteers, is a concern for Macroom FRC but we intend to continue to explore this local need further over the next year.

Centre Users / Collaborators

Over the past year our Centre has been used by a number of Groups for Community purposes. Also we collaborated with numerous local Groups in the execution of our work. We are sincerely grateful to all concerned for their support and friendship.

- Employability Services
- West Cork Travellers Support Group
- Macroom Senior Citizens Committee
- Macroom Youth Network
- West Cork Rainbows
- Macroom Youthreach
- Muskerry Community Employment Project
- Macroom District Environmental Group
- Macroom Youth Services
- Macroom Bereavement Group
- Muskerry Autism Group
- Macroom Adult Literacy
- Macroom CIC
- Bishop McEgan College
- Clann Aire Childcare
- MABS
- West Cork Women Against Violence
- Macroom Community Drugs Initiative
- HSE South
- TUSLA
- GROW
- SHINE
- Macroom Parent and Toddler Group
- West Cork Development Partnership
- SECAD

Finances

2014 Key Figures and Statistics

Salary Costs	€359,230
Operating Costs	€99,744
Tot Expen.	€458,974

Service User Fees Income	€217,662
Free Preschool Income	€80,042
Childcare Subvention Income	€70,980
HSE, TUSLA & Counselling Grants	€79,884
Donations	€500
Tot. Income	€449,068
2015 Surplus / Deficit	(€9,906)

Our operating loss for 2015 was €9906 which will need to be corrected and reversed when setting our service provision rates commencing September 2016. Our main aim financially will be to begin to improve childcare pay rates to more acceptable levels during 2016.

To operate an organisation of our size without reserves and so close to break-even point is not, in our opinion the most secure or desired means of management. It is however the reality in which we operate, with every penny accounted for and always fearing a major expense which would place us in the red.

On the other hand we have done exceptionally well to manage our resources as prudently as we have done while at the same time keeping our services available and affordable.

We are still one of the biggest “small businesses” in Macroom and we employ 27 local people in the provision of our services.

Staffing

Staffing costs amount to over 80% of the annual turnover of Macroom FRC.

A core piece of work facing macroom FRC during 2016 will be to begin to redress the underpayment of staff over the last six years.

We are also concerned with the very low numbers of new local students being trained childcare qualifications. Our concern is that we may not be in a position to meet childcare needs over the coming year and into 2017.

The qualifications, expertise and most of all the attitude of our staff to the provision of a wide range of social services is what makes our Centre special.

We have never been in a position to invest in the quality training programmes which are central to the successes of many organisations far wealthier than ours, but we concentrate on the daily human requirements of our people, from which we achieve



Mag



Orlaith (Leader)



Patrice

quality results.

We know that a happy workforce results in an environment where service users are satisfied to leave their children in our care.

In the environment in which we are working we like to believe that we are up there with the best services. We know that this is mostly down to our people and their commitment to their work and to our principles.

Mile Buiochas

2015 / 2016 Staff

- Seamus O Leary is our Centre Manager and our link from the Board to all daily operations.
- Deirdre Hurley is our Centre Administrator
- Louise Coughlan is our Childcare Supervisor with responsibility for the standards and care of our childcare programme
- Amanda O Callaghan and Orlaith Lynch are our Childcare Seniors who form part of our programme management team and manage childcare and staffing standards.
- We have numerous staff who are designated to childcare
 - Jennifer O Driscoll
 - Amanda O Connor
 - Gina Campion
 - Agnieszka Raba
 - Clare Casey
 - Margaret Kelleher
 - Patrice Power
 - Bernie Spillane
 - Carmel Kelleher
 - Anne O Mahoney
 - Joanna Casey
 - Tara McDonagh
 - Agata Zarzycka
 - Martina Hurley
 - Helen Browne
 - Karen Clarke
 - Megan Callaghan
 - Eimear Cotter
 - Emma Nott
 - Claire Dollard
 - Fiona Cunningham
 - Hannah Dineen
 - Amy Falvey
 - Dan Kiely

Our ambition is to keep our staffing turnover to a minimum so that our consistency of quality is maintained.

Community Employment / TUS

We attempt when possible to benefit from the supports provided through Community Employment and TUS programmes. In this regard we collaborate with Muskerry Community Employment Project and West Cork Development. Our capacity to engage in these programmes is limited by the security barriers which are part of childcare in Ireland and by the available skills which can be found through such schemes. Over the past number of years we have been able to accommodate between one and two such positions per year. We try to balance our approach to ensure that existing jobs are not undermined but also new skills are encouraged with placement workers.



Drawing is always fun

Priority areas for future work.

- Development of facilities in Macroom for community and issue based group usage.
- Formation of a Community-lead Youth Organisation in Macroom to plan and develop youth supports and facilities.
- Development of Community organisation to support community and family initiatives in Macroom capable of filling the areas of responsibility, previously under the remit of the Town Council.
- Community Development provision available locally to support the advancement of community initiatives in the area approaches as defined by Community Development Agencies.



Louise (Childcare Supervisor)



Karen



Jen

- Supports available for Marginalised Groupings in the Macroom Area could also be described as below average with a definite lack of available information of what supports are available being a major problem. Supports for Men's Groups, People who are Experiencing Domestic Violence and supports for people in the Gay Community are areas that need addressing.

Peggy Curtis

Peggy Curtis (Secretary)



All these shoes and just two feet

Organisation Fundamentals

Mission Statement

Macroom Family Resource Centre (The Project) is a Community based voluntary organisation which aspires to promoting and developing family support services in the Macroom Area and its hinterland.

We are committed to working with the full participation of individuals and groups towards improving our Community socially, economically and educationally and with our priority on the most disadvantaged.



Face Painting in Operation

Our Values

- User friendly and approachable with an emphasis on mutual respect.
- Committed to ensuring a social balance at all levels of our operation.

Our Approach

- Working in participation with other agencies while maintaining the right to an independent view.
- Achieving success by offering realistic, well planned and adequately resourced programmes and activities
- Integrating equal opportunities policies in all aspect of our work

Aims

1. To provide, promote and develop a wide range of community based family support services
2. To create opportunities for individuals and families to become actively involved in their own learning and development



Peace and Quiet for Mums & dads



Megan

3. To encourage and provide opportunities for people to become involved in educational and developmental programmes towards realising their full potential

4. To promote and develop a community awareness in health care, education, community development, social justice and empowerment

Membership

The Membership of Macroon Family Resource Centre shall be deemed to come from

- Service Users
- Representatives of Funding Agencies and/or relevant State and Public Bodies
- Representatives of other Community based Voluntary Groups in Macroon.

The Board of Macroon Family Resource Centre reserve the right not to recognise an individual or group as a member if, in the opinion of the Board

- The person or group are not committed to the ethos and aims of the Project or
- The person or group are in serious breach of the fundamental principals of the Project

(Such a decision will only be made once an opportunity has been afforded to the individual or group to be heard by the Board before a decision is made)



Macroon

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE





Seamus O Leary,
Manager Macrooom FRC

Macrooom

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE



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