



MACROOM IFAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

Annual Report 2016/2017





Chairpersons Address / Organisational Overview

March 2017

A warm welcome to everyone who has an interest at any level in Macroom Family Resource Centre. As Chairperson I get to set the tone and deliver the organisational message for the period 2016/2017. I must say that it is a real privilege to present a report that reflects the work of Volunteers and Staff who contribute tirelessly on a daily basis throughout the year to provide services for Macroom and its hinterland.


It is also a great responsibility for us, as an organisation to evaluate our work & experiences so that we can learn and adapt in the interest of the Community in Macroom.

When we measure the effectiveness of our contribution over the past year, it is with a mixture of real satisfaction in some of our achievements and absolute frustration with other experiences. It would be easy to report solely on the positives in this report but In Macroom FRC we see it as part of our role to present it as we see it, even when it may not be a popular perspective.

Highlights

Later in this document the full detail of our operations is contained in our Secretaries Report but I am delighted to pick out some of the highlights, i.e.

- “We worked with over 100 Macroom children during 2016 and impacted positively on the lives of over 80 local Families”
- “We provided over 100 hours of counseling to families and individuals from our area who were in need of supports and direction”
- “We facilitated bereavement programmes for children in Macroom and further afield through our Rainbows Project”
- “We worked intensively with some families to facilitate Supervised and Unsupervised Access with children”

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- “We provided personalised information to the local community to enable easy access to services and direction to appropriate supports”
 - “We provided meeting facilities for local self-help groups”
 - “We provided professional supports to families who needed a multi-organisational approach to their particular problems”
 - “We did so much of this below the public radar and in a respectful and private manner”
 - “We were successful in restoring childcare wages to 2009 levels which is very positive but still a long way short of what it should be”

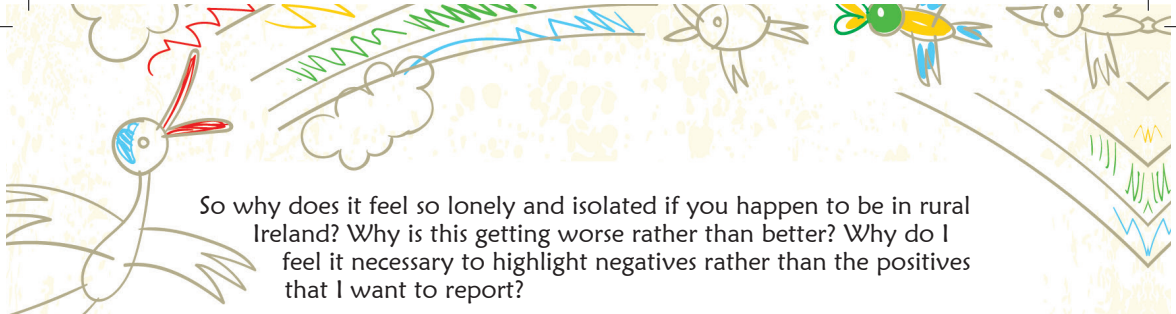
Frustrations & Challenges

- “We didn’t make any progress on our long-term ambition to expand our Centre and our Services. This despite numerous meetings with Politicians and Agencies”
- “We have never managed to have more than 3 weeks funds in reserve at any one time, which makes us constantly vulnerable if something goes wrong” “It also makes us a reactive organisation when we want to be proactive and progressive”
- “As a rural organisation we seem to be more isolated now and out of touch with mainstream decision making than we were 10 years ago and that is despite all the improvements in technology”
- “We are failing in our efforts to promote Community Development Approaches and Methods as the model for developing communities”
- “We are failing in our efforts to secure funds for local groups who are seeking local solutions for local problems”

Our Perspective

We’re told that the world is getting smaller and smaller because of the advancements in technology. Innovations in social media, electronic communications systems and electronic reporting, have all served to improve and make a better connection between us and the world.





So why does it feel so lonely and isolated if you happen to be in rural Ireland? Why is this getting worse rather than better? Why do I feel it necessary to highlight negatives rather than the positives that I want to report?

Over the past number of years the sector in which we operate has become more and more automated and centralised. We're sure that this assists greatly with the management of funds and distribution of resources but it has been at the expense of actual direct contact between the decision makers and the places where services are provided. This is particularly the case in rural Ireland and the greater the distance from Dublin the more isolating it gets. Has anyone noticed the hard handed tactics of many of our public bodies in their approach to Community Groups and Individuals? I must say that we find it ironic that we are tasked with the provision of local community supports that are friendly and approachable while our experience from the other side is so hard and dictatorial.

The opportunity to form relationships with the various agencies, who fund and support community groups, towards successfully developing local solutions for local issues, has all but disappeared. The contact time now is mostly confined to audits & assessing compliance with regulations and programmes that are directed and managed centrally.

As a local resource in Macroom we want to be seen locally as an organisation that cares about what is impacting on peoples' lives and one that is willing to work with people to look for solutions to problems.

At the same time we will continue to seek to form relationships with our political representatives & our partners in the public sector to continue to make the case for Community Resourcing and Community Development, which includes person to person engagement as a central pillar to its process.





Summary

In summary I would like to remind you of the fairy tale when the King was convinced that he was wearing the most beautiful set of clothes when in actual fact he wore none. Only for the little boy in the crowd who shouted that “the King Has No Clothes” nothing would have changed.

We believe that there are many naked Kings in the world right now and if we don't say out loud that they are naked then nothing will change.

I would like to thank finally all those who contributed in any way to our work in 2016 / 2017. Our Service Users, Our Volunteers, Our Staff, Our Leader Seamus and of Course my Board whose task has become more and more onerous over the past years but from whom I have never heard a complaint.

Thank you most sincerely

Olive O Riordan (Chairperson)

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

Secretary's Report

The Board

This report is for a period of 12 months from March 2016 to March 2017 . 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 2016 AGM was held on the 9th March 2016 and this report is being presented to the 2017 AGM on 15th March 2017.





Resource Centre

Our time in 2016 / 2017 has been dominated to a large extent by continued changes to the required standards for the provision of services in Macroom. Operating, as we do, as a Company Limited by Guarantee with Charitable Status and involved in the provision of supports to Children and Families, we have been impacted by new regulations in:

- Governance of Charitable Organisations under the Charities Regulator
- Child Safety Policies and structures under the Childcare Act
- Inspections under the Childcare Acts and Regulations on behalf of TUSLA
- Inspection by the Dept. Of Education & Skills on Early Years Education
- Inspection by the HSE Environmental Health Department

All of the above require preparation, time, follow-up and ongoing change. None of the above provides additional resources to implement the changes, train the people or maintain the standards.

The proportion of time being spent by our Board and Senior Management on Governance and Administration has now increased from 25% time commitment to 75%.

We now debate less about the needs of Macroom and how we might address these needs, and more about crossing T's and dotting I's
Is this progress?

In 2016 we continued to provide all of the services that have been established over the past decade, i.e.

- An extensive Childcare Programme which continues to adapt to new standards and new Government Policies
- A Counseling Programme which has continued to operate despite funding reductions over the past 8 years.
- A Rainbows Programme which provides supports for children who have experienced trauma through bereavement and loss of loved-ones
- An Access Programme for families, both Supervised and Unsupervised
- Community Supports for Local Groups addressing issues of marginalisation or local concern
- An Information and Referral services for local families along with a listening ear for those who are in need of such a facility.



We still have aspirations and Plans for:

- More secure, robust and progressive Core Funding for our Centre which would allow us to pursue new sources of funding and to address new and emerging needs.
- An expansion of our services and facilities to provide for “unshared” space for Counseling, Supervised Access, Group Facilitation and Sensory Facilities
- Funding streams for the completion of our Centre on the 1st floor to accommodate existing and new services.

Our Stats have been consistent

- We continue to be the biggest “small employer” in Macrooom with 30 employees (during 2016) 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 2016.

Core Funding in Macrooom FRC

The distinction between Core funding and Service provision funding is important to us. Service provision funding relates directly to specific services provided or numbers of children enrolled and can fluctuate considerably from year to year. Core funding provides for us to continue to exist from year to year regardless of numbers. Our core funding ensures the continuity of services in between busy times and not-so-busy times. Macrooom FRC, as an Organisation has been core funded by HSE since we opened in 2005. This funding was divided in 2014, and now we are core funded by HSE and by TUSLA.

Core funding covers the cost of two part-time positions in Macrooom FRC along with some operational cost contribution.

Most of the revenue for Macrooom 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 follows that child.





Services in Macroom FRC

Childcare

In the calendar year 2016 we provided childcare services for 150 local children. At any one time during this period we had up to 90 children registered for services, while, up to 60 children were actually present in our Centre at particular times.


This is a major responsibility and we endeavour to do our very best to ensure that all of our children get the best possible care and developmental supports.

This is a time of great change for childcare work in Ireland, impacting on standards of service provision, levels of qualifications and cost to users and to providers. In Macroom FRC we have continued to adapt to all of the emerging requirements and regulations and we Endeavour to provide a high-quality resource for Families in Macroom and its surrounding areas.

2016 Inspection: We commented in last years annual report that Service Inspections, in our opinion, were overly concentrated on negative aspects of services, while not referring in a balanced fashion to positive practices of services. We are pleased that our most recent inspection, carried out in may 2016 reflected on many of the praise-worthy aspects of our service along with the possible areas that could be improved. We are delighted to display our Inspection reports in our main reception area along with all of our current policies for inspection by service users and the public in general.

Our Team continues to work hard on meeting the standards required for the provision of a top class childcare service in Macroom. 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





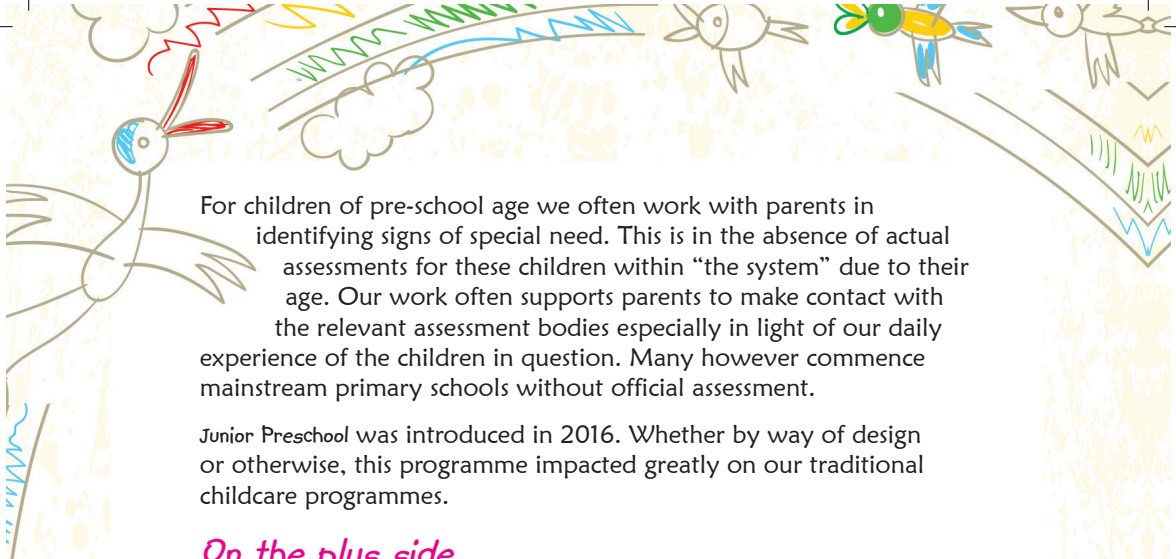
children are given appropriate choices in activities at whatever age they are at. We have bedded in this approach through Staff Training and ongoing monitoring of our childcare services. At any one time there are numerous activities going on in each room and children participate in the one that appeals 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. 2016 is the first year since we opened that child numbers decreased. On reflection we have concluded that this is directly related to the absence of notable construction of family housing in Macroom for an 8-year period which greatly impacted on the influx of new families and child numbers. In real terms it has impacted significantly on staff also.

Macroom FRC is sanctioned to accommodate up to 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 to roster staff, it does allow us to accommodate during a fiscal year, up to 150 children in total throughout the year, which was the case during 2016.

We have had a history of working with children with disabilities for many years. Without any direct funding for this work, we have depended on innovative partnerships between parents, schools and Macroom FRC to enable simple but effective arrangements to be put in place and coordinated effectively. This is what we do best. We try to be innovative and flexible to accommodate need. The introduction of AIM (Access & Inclusion Model) administered by Pobal during 2016 provided us with a formal means to support children with disabilities to integrate better with their peers. We greatly welcome this measure as an added string to our bow of services. 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. AIM has helped us to overcome this obstacle in Certain circumstances.





For children of pre-school age we often work with parents in identifying signs of special need. This is in the absence of actual assessments for these children within “the system” due to their age. Our work often supports parents to make contact with the relevant assessment bodies especially in light of our daily experience of the children in question. Many however commence mainstream primary schools without official assessment.

Junior Preschool was introduced in 2016. Whether by way of design or otherwise, this programme impacted greatly on our traditional childcare programmes.

On the plus side

- We would always welcome new or additional investment into the sector and we are sure that many families benefitted from the reduction in childcare costs.
- We think children who were not attending childcare sessions have benefitted from a year of interaction with their peers and they are better prepared for a term in Senior Preschool.
- The child development opportunities are greatly enhanced when the child is in an environment that supports such development

On the minus side

- Some of the children who became eligible for Junior Preschool were not ready for the service, i.e. some were still in nappies, and others were emotionally immature.
- The ratio of 1: 11 proved to be very difficult for this grouping especially given that the same children, if they remained in our care outside of the session warranted a 1: 6 ratio.
- The impact of this service on the overall service was detrimental financially and impacted on staffing levels.



Planning

We hope, over the next year to introduce internal IT systems that will support the implementation of our childcare services and the effectiveness of our administration. The proposed systems will also improve the transparency of services for parents. October 2017 will also see us commencing our process of application for the Quality Award “Smart Start”. Through this programme we hope to continue our drive towards continued improvement and excellence.

Macroom Family Resource Centre

Childcare Pricing Policy from 1st September 2016

- Our centre operates a core pricing policy of between €4.80 & €5.30 / 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 additional
- We give priority to full-time and regular care over part-time and intermittent care.
- We are now part of the National Childcare Investment Programme whereby service users can be entitled to have child care cost subsidised in line with personal circumstances.





Service	Cost per week	Cost per day	Cost per half-day <5 hours	Cost per Additional Hours
Babies Under 1 year	€240	€48	€26.5	€5
Wobblers between 1 and 2 years	€240	€48	€26.5	€5
Toddlers over 2 years of age	€240	€48	€26.5	€5
After Schools from 1.40pm	€125	€25	N/A	N/A
After Schools 2.40pm & 3pm	€100	€20	N/A	N/A
Pre-school Play-Group (5 sessions per week)	Free for eligible children €75 if paying	€15 / Session	N/A	N/A

Counseling and Family Supports

Counseling, 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 counseling 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 Counseling Programme is funded by the Child and Family Agency (TUSLA). 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.

In 2016 we provided counseling for approximately 20 clients (either individuals or families) and supported up to 100 sessions locally in Macroom.



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

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

Supervised Visitation / Access

Our “Access Programme” is, without doubt an unrecognised resource for Macroom. This service receives no direct funding outside of our existing resources.

Without this intervention many parents in rural areas would be forced to use services in Cork City at great cost in terms of finance, time and distress to children.

Our interventions have proven to be a mixed set 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. This service has always tended to take up a disproportionate percentage of time and resources. When service users utilise this resource it tends to be long-term and almost invariably involves dealing with Families, Social workers, Solicitors and directly with the Courts.

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 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, counseling and educational enquiries through this medium continuously over the past few years. 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 continue to work with existing and longstanding friends while at the same time we 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 have 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 practiced in Macroom FRC since we opened in 2005. A number of Rainbow modules were operated during 2016, 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 continuously throughout the year as we require sufficient numbers of children to commence programme modules.

Macroom Bereavement Group

This is a local group who provide independent supports for families and individuals who have been affected by bereavement. Services / Supports include drop-in supports, local meetings and planned talks.



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 group operates in a private and low key fashion and provides a local support to members of the Macroom group.

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
- IRD Duhallow



Finances

2016 Key Figures and Statistics

Salary Costs	€334,623
Operating Costs	€75,419
Tot Expen.	€410,042
Service User Fees Income	€200,886
Free Preschool Income	€79,225
Childcare Subvention Income	€37,898
CETS (Parent Education Subsidy)	€19,515
AIM (Access/Inclusion Childcare)	€4,631
DCYA / Pobal Capital Grant	€4,986)
HSE, TUSLA & Counseling Grants	€80,804
Donations	€750 Tot. Income
Total Income	€428,695
2016 Surplus / Deficit	€18,653 (€17,952 of which is Advance payments)

Macroom FRC was successful in reversing the loss made in 2015 to a break-even point by the end of December 2016. Our operating surplus for 2016 was €701. Although this is a welcome situation, it is in our opinion too close for comfort and we will be endeavoring to greatly improve our sustainability over the coming years through a variety of measures which will unfortunately include price increases to enable us to remain compliant and operating in accordance with best practice.

Staffing

2016 saw a restoration in our Staff salary levels to 2009 hourly rates. At that time all pay rates were cut to enable us to ride out the downturn in the economy.

We announced in last years report that we intended to address this situation and the Board are delighted that this has been possible.

Our People are the most important element of our operations in Macroom. Over 80% of our expenditure is on our staff. Our efforts to maintain a loyal, well-trained and content workforce is central to the quality of service that we aspire to providing. We hope to continue to build the quality of our services over the coming years through staff development programmes and better reward systems.

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.

Mile Buiochas

2016 / 2017 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 within our childcare programme
- Amanda O Callaghan, Orlaith Lynch and Amanda Twohig 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
 - Bernie Spillane



- Carmel Kelleher
- Anne O Mahoney
- Joanna Casey
- Tara McDonagh
- Agata Zarzycka
- Martina Hurley
- Karen Clarke
- Megan Callaghan
- Emma Nott
- Claire Dollard
- Fiona Cunningham
- Hannah Dinneen
- Dan Kiely
- Helena Kelly

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

Community Employment / TUS

As per the past 6 years we have benefitted during 2016 from the supports provided to us through Community Employment and TUS

secondments / placements. Our strategic decisions to operate our childcare services without using CE workers would appear to have been wise given that Centres who have become over dependant on such programmes are now experiencing difficulties with qualification requirements. We are thankful for the continued support of Muskerry Community Employment Project and West Cork Development Partnership in regard to CE & TUS supports. We hope to continue to try to balance our approach to ensure that existing jobs are not undermined but also new skills are encouraged with placement workers.



Peggy Curtis (Secretary)



Macroom FRC Core Details

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.

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
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



Objectives

1. Provision of a quality childcare service for children from 3-months to 13 years
2. Provision of a professional counselling service for individuals, couples and families
3. Promotion of research into the difficulties being experienced by families
4. To encourage and provide opportunities for people with leadership qualities to become involved in the community
5. To promote educational opportunities
6. To work hand in hand with other agencies in alleviating poverty
7. To develop an information bank on community initiatives, educational opportunities, health and rights issues and to make this information available to the local community and to service users
8. To listen and respond to local community initiatives with particular focus on disadvantage

