



MACROOM FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

ANNUAL REPORT 2017/2018





Chairpersons Address / Organisational Overview

March 2018

A Partner in the design and development of future Community Supports & Approaches in Macroom?

A funnel for the distribution of State Funding to local communities without long-term commitment or guarantees?

An instrument of the State, dependent on State Funding but technically an independent, autonomous Organisation?

An actual extension of State services except that there is no long-term commitment to the Organisation or the People?

An Independent Body, with local Governance and local Control?

These are the questions that we pose for ourselves as an organisation in every year that we are in existence. In truth, during 2017 we have been all of these things, depending on who we are dealing with or how we are viewed by any particular stakeholder.

Most of our Service Users view MFRC as the provider of the one particular service that they avail of. Most are busy with their specific needs and getting on with the busy day to day chores of running households and rearing families. Once a year we ask that you take time out to look at the other things that go on in our Centre and to be aware that all of our services exist because there is a need for that service in Macroom.

As Chairperson I get to set the tone and deliver the organisational message for the period 2017/2018. 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.

This year I would like to leave the detail of our work for the past year to the Secretaries Report, which appears later in this publication, and to give an informed overview of our experience of working as a Voluntary Community Organisation in Macroom in 2017.

New Developments

We try to keep a close eye on developments in Macroom which are likely to impact on, or have the potential to impact on Local Communities and Local Families. The following are just a few of our observations:





- National Childcare policies have really moved forward over the past few years with the introduction of Pre-school funding for Juniors and Seniors, Childcare for Parents returning to Education, Subvention Childcare for Parents in receipt of State Welfare, Integration funding for children with disabilities and last year the introduction of the Universal childcare support for all parents. It is promised that the Universal funding will be increased over the coming years.
 - Our response in MFRC has been to accommodate as many people as possible under each of the available programmes, and to provide appropriate childcare supports for those who require such supports, whether these are typical and mainstream or specific to families who require alternative types of supports. We are no exception, in Macroom to the fact that childcare is expensive to avail of or to provide and our constant challenge has been to provide valuable services at the most affordable rates possible.
- New Housing developments seem to be, at last on the horizon. Plans are advanced for the construction of 18 Social Housing Units right on our doorstep in the Fairfield, while a further “private development completion project” of up to 150 dwellings is imminent within a five minute walk of Macroom FRC.
 - Our response has been to welcome any form of investment in the Macroom area through state or private sources. We have pointed out in previous reports that Macroom has been the victim of a drought of construction for the best part of a decade, which is directly in line with the rest of “Rural Ireland Inc.”.
 - Our response has been to discuss and analyse the impact of significant local developments on the local community infrastructure in Macroom. For instance the impact on Schools, Traffic, Businesses, local state services and in our case childcare and family supports. All of these will be impacted upon and will require planning, adjustment and investment.
 - Macroom FRC has submitted proposals to Cork County Council, seeking additional space to be set-aside in advance of significant development for the purpose of Community and Family facilities & supports. We believe that such foresight would prepare Macroom for the inevitable impact of planned developments in Macroom. We fear that in our “National Rush” to address the housing crisis, we

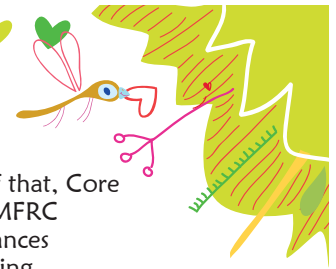




will slip into the historical weakness of neglecting community infrastructure. Macrooom have lobbied at Council and Political level on these points but as yet without success. We remain hopeful.

- Some very valuable national family support programmes have been squeezed to near extinction. In particular, programmes which did not directly employ local people in providing services have been almost wiped out of funding. One such example is the Rainbows Programme which has been operated in Macrooom since we opened in 2005. From 2008 onwards this programme has been moved from its original mother organisation, the Family Support Agency, to Solas for a short period and is now under the auspices of TUSLA. From our perspective the changes have been as follows:
 - The programme has undergone a complete revamp of policy, procedure and training
 - All funding is now channelled to a central administration / management hub in Dublin
 - All volunteers, including Coordinators and Facilitators will require complete retraining at either their own or MFRC expense
 - Grant aid to Organisations, choosing to participate in Rainbows will be nil and legitimate programme expenses to volunteers are not permitted.
- Our response has been to make the decision to be part of the Programme for now, in the hope that improvements will follow. As a local resource we really believe that rainbows should be expanding and not contracting. We believe that the model being introduced at the moment can only suit areas with larger populations where there is a significant volume of clients. We believe that the burden on volunteers in this programme is far too much and in the long-term unsustainable.
- Core Funding for Macrooom FRC has been diminishing and under threat since the 2008 crash. At that time expenditure was slashed





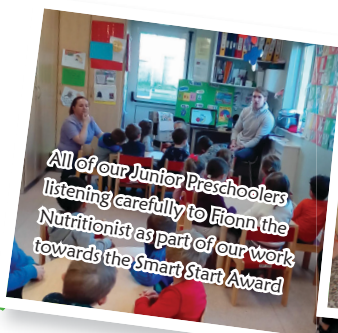
throughout the public sector and as an extension of that, Core grant supports to Voluntary Organisations such as MFRC were also reduced proportionally and in some instances by far more. Reasons were found to eliminate funding for some national Community Development Programmes which had been built up over the previous decades. Now that there is talk of restoration within the public sector, we hear no mention of restoration to the Community Sector.

- Our response has been to apply annually for increased supports towards our core operational functions.
- Our response is to question the validity and legality of cuts which impact on employee and organisational rights under long-term continuous funding arrangements.
- Our response is to point out that Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment or TUPE, applies to state funded bodies as it does to private enterprise.
- Our response is to continue to lobby for fair treatment of the Voluntary and Community Sector so that we can be an equal partner in the development of new community support structures.

Our Goals

Last year I pointed to the frustrations that we experienced as an organisation. I take no pride in re-stating some of these again in this report. I can say that it has not from the want of trying and I can assure readers that we will continue to pursue our hope of making inroads into our goals.

- “It is our long-term ambition to expand our Centre and our Services and to achieve this we will continue to liaise, collaborate and pester whenever we have the opportunity”
- “We want to broaden the financial and operational base of MFRC so that we can become less reactive, more strategic and more secure”
- “We want to become less isolated as an organisation and more active in our efforts to influence policies impacting on rural



All of our Junior Preschoolers listening carefully to Fionn the Nutritionist as part of our work towards the Smart Start Award



Making a mess with paint and cars in Daycare



Circle Time with Amanda





communities

- “We will continue to promote Community Development Approaches and Methods as the model for developing communities”
- “We will continue to support local efforts to secure funds for local groups who are seeking local solutions for local problems”

I would like to thank finally all those who contributed in any way to our work in 2017 / 2018. Our Service Users, Our Volunteers and Our Staff have all contributed greatly to the immense amount of valuable community activity which takes place in our Centre.

Between my Board and our Manager Seamus we seem to adjust and advance each year. Perhaps we are never intended to reach an end goal and the job is more to do with the journey and the impacts that we make on our people and them on us.

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 2017 to March 2018. 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 2017 AGM was held on the 15th March 2016 and this report is being presented to the 2018 AGM on 15th March 2018.

Resource Centre

As I write this report, I am conscious of the work that we do every spring in reporting on every aspect of our work for which we receive Public or State funding, in an effort to ensure that we will continue to receive the funding for another year. While our “work programmes” tend to commence at the beginning of September annually, our finances are reported for the period January to December.

A reality for most Organisations like Macroom FRC is in adapting to





the multiple forms of reporting that is required by multiple funders. As a consequence of the demands of “Governance”, this time of year is particularly busy for those of us who are involved in the financial and accountability side of the work of the Organisation. This is not the attractive side of what we do but without it we would not be in a position to operate multiple services and supports in Macroom.

Our services have remained stable over the past year while the service users have changed and the difficulties that result from emerging communities needs continue to challenge our capacity to respond effectively.

In general we have been very active in a number of key programmes, namely:

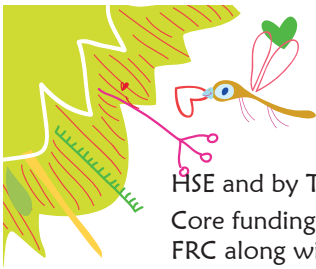
- Childcare: This Programme dominates the bulk of the financial and staffing resources of Macroom FRC.
- Counseling: Both Family and Individual which we operate on a referral basis but are not always in a position to provide due to availability of resources.
- Parental / Child Access: This service is the only such support available locally and without which service users would have to travel to Cork or Killarney
- Bereavement Support through Rainbows: A facilitation programme for children who have experienced bereavement
- Community Information services, which operates formally and informally for our Service users as they pass through.
- Community Group Supports where we provide advice, start-up supports and referral services to new and emerging groups who wish to work on local issues.

Core Funding in Macroom 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 while Core funding provides for us to continue to exist from year to year and be in a position to respond to local needs as necessary. Our core funding ensures the continuity of services in between busy times and not-so-busy times. Macroom 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 Macroom FRC along with some operational cost contributions.

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, follows that child.

Services in Macroom FRC

Childcare

During 2017 we operated our Childcare Programme for a total of 51 weeks, with one weeks closure for the Christmas period. Our efforts were in the provision of services for children from 3 months to 13 years. Our services included Creche, both part-time and full-time: Daycare, both part-time and full-time: After-schools, including early and late collections and: Morning Preschool sessions for both Junior and Senior for children from under three to 5 years.

Many of our children attend for a mixture of services depending on the Family childcare requirements.

In the calendar year 2017 we provided childcare services for 150 local children.

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.

From year to year the childcare needs in Macroom change and evolve in line with new available funding such as Junior Preschool and the arrival of new children in the area by way of new births and new families relocating to the area. As a result of this constant change, we are obliged to re-plan and rethink our services continuously so that we can respond to local needs effectively.

The standards of governance, safety and qualifications are being raised every year, and keeping pace with new requirements is a constant challenge for all of us here in the Centre.

Macroom FRC is committed to an approach of “Child Integration” at all aspects of our service. This includes, working with issues of cultural diversity, economic diversity and physical / mental diversity. While, in





theory this approach sits well with all of our stake holders, the reality of achieving full integration is a constant challenge. We work hard at overcoming these challenges by:

- Ensuring that our staff are trained and accredited in all aspects of the Protection and Welfare of Children through Children First which is our National Framework
- Placing additional staff in rooms where language is a barrier to children participating in activities and where possible providing by-lingual services. This plays a major role in preparing children for Primary School.
- Closely liaising with parents of children with disabilities to assist them in sourcing the required supports to ensure that their child can attend MFRC and participate fully with all of our other children.
- Supporting Parents to access available childcare programmes, without which childcare would not be possible.
- 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.

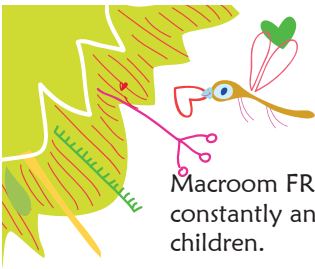
Without any direct funding for this work, we have depended on innovative partnerships between parents, schools and Macroom FRC to enable simple but effective arrangements to be put in place and coordinated effectively. This is what we do best. We try to be innovative and flexible to accommodate need.

New Developments in 2017

As part of our constant ambition to improve our service for our many service users we introduced “ChildPaths” in September of 2017. This is a Child Centre appropriate software system which supports our childcare record system and greatly reduces the need for hard copy recording. This system records individual children and specific groups of children by way of attendance, feeding, hygiene, activities and child development.

The most popular advantage by far in our experience has been the capacity of the system to allow parents to keep in touch with everything that their child is experiencing and doing while they are in





Macroon FRC. Photographic and documented information is updated constantly and can be accessed privately by parents for their own children.

Another positive aspect of the system has been to facilitate children and parents to interact at home in continuation of the daily activities.

We have provided this innovation at no additional cost to Service Users in 2017 & it is our intention to incorporate it into our future service provision.

Planned Developments 2018

We hope to participate in the “Smart Start” Programme in 2018 and to achieve the Smart Start award later in the year. This is a quality programme operated through the National Childhood Network and supported by the HSE. It focusses on Macroon Family Resource Centre becoming a Health Ireland Pre-school Service.

Staff in Macroon FRC have already undertaken training in this programme and we hope to roll it out over the coming months. The main focus of the programme will involve working with Parents & Children on

- Health Promotion
- Oral Health
- Nutrition
- Health & Safety
- Physical Activity
- Emotional Well-being /

Macroon Family Resource Centre

Childcare Pricing Policy from 28th August 2017

- Our centre operates a core pricing policy of between €4.80 & €6 / Hour (or part of) depending on the type of service being availed of in Macroon 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.



Gluing shapes to make transport pictures



10 at 10 with Amanda, Carmel and Ann as part of Smart Start



10





Half Day 3.5hrs – 5 hrs. Full day 5 – 10 hrs

- We give priority to full-time and regular care over part-time and intermittent care.
- We operate within the Gov. Subsidy Programmes

Service	5 days	4 days	3 days	2 days	Cost per day	Cost per half-day <5 hours	Cost per Additional Hours
Babies Under 1 year	€220	€184	€144	€100	€55	€30	€6
Wobblers between 1 and 2 years	€220	€184	€144	€100	€55	€30	€6
Toddlers over 2 years of age	€220	€184	€144	€100	€55	€30	€6
After Schools from 1.40pm	€130	€110	€88	€62	€34	N/A	N/A
After Schools 2.40pm & 3pm	€110	€93	€75	€52	€29	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

Our Counselling Group regret to report that our resources for this programme were exhausted by July of 2017. This was as a result of reduced levels of funding for this work during 2017. Funding levels for





this work have reduced from over €10,000 per year in 2011 to €1,500 in 2017. Despite our efforts to get as much value for our funding as possible over the past year it has not been possible to respond to all requests for counselling during 2017.

Our client numbers have halved when compared to numbers in 2016. 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 we have placed 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. We hope to secure additional funding for this service in 2018

We will continue to attempt to provide a range of counseling options within our available resources, i.e.

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

The nearest Supervision Centre outside of Macroom FRC is based in Cork City. We have provided supports for Families through Supervised and Unsupervised Access every year for the past decade and each year this service has been utilised by local families on multiple occasions and by some for a number of consecutive years.

This service is fundamental in its nature and provides for Children to have Access to Parents in a safe environment which is neutral and away from difficult family situations.

Our “Access Programme” is, without doubt an unrecognised resource for Macroom and yet his 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.





This service, as operated by MFRC has proven itself as a local requirement, however the model and facilities are in immediate need of enhancement to operate in line with best practice and guidelines.

By its nature this type of support is provided in an atmosphere which is adversarial and sometimes aggressive.

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.

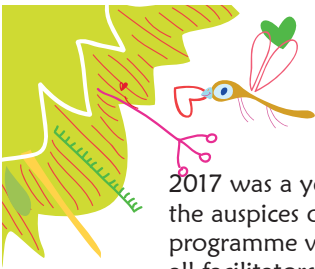
Like so many of the supports that we provide this service is in dire need of further development and investment.

Rainbows

Rainbows is a Programme which supports children who are experiencing difficulties as a result of bereavement in their family circle. This can be either the death of someone close to the child or a loss through family break-up.

The programme works through a series of facilitated sessions with groups of children of similar age and it is facilitated by local volunteers who are trained by "Rainbows Nationally". Our Volunteers, both facilitators and programme coordinators operate Rainbows entirely on a voluntary basis and without remuneration for any aspect of the work.





2017 was a year when the Programme was repositioned under the auspices of TUSLA and the structures and methodology for the programme was revised. This revision will necessitate a re-training of all facilitators and coordinating bodies, such as Macroom FRC, if the programme is to be operated locally.

Macroom FRC has signed up to be a Member of the Programme and we have received commitments from our facilitators to undergo revised training during 2018.

Although Macroom does not generate the volume of demand for the programme as is generated in more populated regions, we are committed to the continuation of our work in this area as a valuable means of support for local Children and Families.

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. Some of our local friends include:

Macroom Rainbows Group

This Group recently amalgamated with Macroom FRC to facilitate the effective management / governance of the programme. The volunteers involved continue to work with the programme under the auspices of a sub-group of

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. This service is provided by a local group of volunteers who have been tutored in the provision of supports to loved ones of recently deceased local people.





This is a non-intrusive and non-judgmental service which can be accessed easily in the event that an individual requires such support.

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
- Macroom Youthreach
- Muskerry Community Employment Project
- Macroom District Environmental Group
- Macroom Youth Services
- Macroom Bereavement Group
- Macroom Adult Literacy
- Macroom CIC
- Bishop McEgan College
- Clann Aire Childcare
- MABS
- West Cork Women Against Violence
- Macroom Community Drugs Initiative
- HSE North (Southern Section)
- TUSLA
- GROW
- SHINE
- West Cork Development Partnership
- SECAD
- IRD Duhallow





Finances

2016 Key Figures and Statistics

Salary Costs	€323,541
Operating Costs	€92,812
Tot Expen.	(€416,353)
Service User Fees Income	€204,205
Free Preschool Income	€97,953
Childcare Subvention Income	€21,815
CETS (Parent Education Subsidy)	€27,333
AIM (Access/Inclusion Childcare)	€6,484
CCSP (Universal Subvention)	€3,872
HSE, TUSLA & Counseling Grants	€77,584
Donations	€500 Tot. Income
Total Income	€439,746
Net Creditors / Debtors @ 31/12/17	(€17,431)
2017 Surplus / Deficit	€5,962

Despite investing significantly in the maintenance and upkeep of the Centre during 2017 we turned at the end of the year with an operating surplus of €5,962. Our intention for the coming year is to ensure that operations are within budget and generating enough to enable us to maintain services the physical appearance of the Centre to high standards.

We will be endeavoring to secure funding from all available sources on an ongoing basis but we anticipate that we will need to invest substantially in Training and Maintenance during 2018.

Staffing

Our weekly operational hours for 2017 were maintained in line with the previous year at between 500 and 550 staffing hours per week. Although our actual Staff numbers reduced, we balanced our requirements through additional hours with existing staff, many of whom have been with Macroom FRC for over a decade. We interpret this statistic as a very positive element in the operation of our services.

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 provide. We hope to continue to build the quality of our services over the coming years through staff development programmes and better reward systems.



16



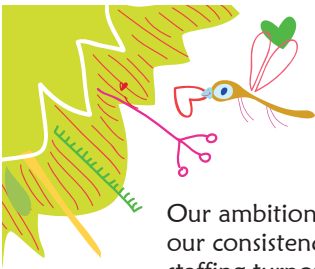


The qualifications, expertise and most of all the attitude of our staff to the provision of a wide range of social services is what makes our Centre special.

Mile Buiochas

- 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
 - Agata Zarzycka
 - Martina Hurley
 - Karen Clarke
 - Emma Nott
 - Hilda Regaspi
 - Sandra O Mahony
 - Claire O Riordan
 - Fiona Cunningham
 - Hannah Dinneen
 - Dan Kiely





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

