



# ANNUAL REPORT 2021

## St Brigid's Family and Community Centre

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### Chairperson's Report

*The impact of Covid-19 continued to present challenges for all sections of St. Brigids Family and Community Centre during 2021. The Board acknowledges the commitment and dedication of staff, volunteers and management in continuing to reach out to the community to provide ongoing support to families, individuals and groups throughout the year. Most of our services continued to run, either in person or remotely, despite ongoing restrictions.*

*2021 saw the retirement of our long serving Counselling Coordinator, Noeleen Murphy. We extend every good wish to Noeleen for the future. We welcomed Dr. Eamonn Meaney into the Counselling Coordinator role in September and we look forward to his stewardship of the service going forward.*

*2021 was also the year that Rose Dunne retired from our Charity Shops after many years of valuable service. We also wish Rose all the very best for her retirement.*

*Finally I would like to reflect on the hardship experienced by many in our community over the past two years. We in St. Brigids look forward to a return to normality in 2022 and the opportunity to fully open our doors to all who need us.*



## *Manager's Report*

Covid-19 had a major impact throughout 2021, however St. Brigid's continued to reach out to the community to find ways of engaging with and supporting families, groups and individuals. Covid also presented us with opportunities to be more flexible in our approach, to consider new and innovative ways of delivering support, to strengthen existing partnerships and establish new collaborations.

The use of learning pods in the Children Centre, both indoors and out, enabled the service to continue to operate as safely as possible throughout 2021 while ensuring a nurturing, child-centered environment was always maintained. Welcome support came from Revenue with the extension of the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme, EWSS, and Pobal funding was secured to further enhance the outdoor space. Some future-proofing re-structuring took place, including the construction of three additional toilets to facilitate the ongoing development of the school aged service. In the face of a very challenging year Karen Ryan, Children Centre Manager, and the entire team remained committed to providing an accessible, inclusive and professional service which remained focused on promoting learning, play and fun.

While the retail sector was hard hit by Covid-19 in 2021, our Charity Shops in Westgate and Gladstone Street continued to partner with Thriftify, the online retail platform, throughout 2021. Undoubtedly the opening of our Gladstone St. shop in late 2020 lacked all the fanfare Orla Sullivan, Shops Supervisor, and her team would have liked, nonetheless both staff and customers couldn't fail to acknowledge what a great shopping experience it offers in the up and coming Waterford Cultural Quarter. The shops re-opened to the public in May with all necessary and appropriate safety protocols in place. It must also be noted that St. Brigid's is grateful for the support of our Shops landlords during the closed period. In September Rose Dunne retired after many years of loyal customer service in St. Brigid's Charity Shops. Rose was known and respected by both

staff and customers. She will be missed, but everybody in St. Brigid's wishes her the very best for her retirement.

St. Brigid's Counselling Service continued to engage with clients both remotely and, as the year progressed, in person. An effective Covid Protocol combined with the introduction of anti-bacterial clear screens and air purifiers ensured a safe and secure environment at all times. The Counselling Service experienced change with the retirement of Noeleen Murphy in September after many years of dedicated work on behalf of St. Brigid's. However the Counselling Co-coordinator role was taken on by Dr. Eamonn Meaney, himself a member of the counselling team who has been delivering Adolescent Counselling in St. Brigid's for a number of years. Some re-structuring took place within the service in the second half of the year in response to the ongoing development of the service. The Resource & Referral Service was replaced with a dedicated Counselling Admin Support post. We welcomed Sylvia Walsh to this role in late 2021. Covid-19 restrictions in 2020 and 2021 focused our attention on the role of I.T. to support the delivery of a secure, effective and efficient service for our clients.

The Family Support team continued to deliver programmes and one to one support to families by phone, e-mail and Zoom throughout 2021, and it was noted that feedback was generally positive with many parents identifying transport, work and childcare as barriers for in-person engagement.

Brendan Power, Community Employment Scheme Supervisor, also responded to the restrictions of Covid-19 by continuing to support participants by phone and via Zoom. By the third quarter of 2021 all Community Employment participants were back at work.

2021 was also a year of change in the Portlaw Community Resource Hub. Having been instrumental in the establishment and development of the service in Clodiagh House, Carmel Connolly stepped away from the role in March to concentrate on other areas of work within St. Brigid's. Patricia Barrett joined the team in Portlaw in 2021. In September Yvette Aylward bid farewell to St. Brigid's and to the community she had supported over the previous 5 years, all of whom wished her well for the future. Pyper Ludlow joined the team in late 2021. Changes in the usage of Clodiagh House necessitated a flexible approach to programme delivery and the outside area was developed to facilitate groups along with greater use of the enhanced gymnasium space. While Covid-19 impacted on

the full opening of the service in the early part of 2021, by early summer in-person services and groups had re-commenced.

Additional Tusla funding made available in 2021 in response to Covid-19 enabled St. Brigid's to update WiFi in the Centre, to upgrade I.T. in the Counselling Service, to source air-purifiers for use in the Centre, in the Shops and in the Children Centre and to develop the outdoor area in the Centre to facilitate groups and events. Support from Tusla to re-purpose un-used funding enabled St. Brigid's to support children to access Community Play Therapy and Creative Therapies in Waterford.

During 2021 stronger links were forged with the two other Waterford Family Resource Centres, Brill FRC and Sacred Heart FRC. A bench was erected in the Waterford People's Park to acknowledge support from the Waterford FRC Network for Waterford families. An initiative between the National FRC Forum and the Gambling Awareness Trust provided a funding opportunity in late 2021 to employ a Counsellor to work with individuals experiencing problem gambling and their families. This was a joint funding application on behalf of the Waterford FRC Network with St. Brigid's as the lead agency. We look forward to the full roll out of this important service in 2022.

The Board continued to meet via Zoom throughout 2021. Due to family and work commitments Davin Power stepped down mid-year, however St. Brigid's then welcomed Billy O'Keeffe onto the Board. Billy brings a wealth of experience of working in the voluntary sector. A proposed Board training and networking event could not take place in 2021 due to Covid restrictions but it is hoped that it will occur in the first half of 2022.

St. Brigid's enters 2022 having withstood many challenges over the past two years and ready to respond to what the coming year may bring.

## ST BRIGID'S FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

St Brigid's Family Resource Centre is one of 121 Family Resource Centre in the country. The FRC Programme is a national community and family based support programme and its core funding is provided by TUSLA. The Centre provides a range of Family & Community Supports including counselling, social groups, information & advice, health and wellbeing programmes, parenting programmes, employment support, one to one parenting, outreach work and childcare. The FRC Programme is a part of Tusla's parenting strategy which aims to help combat disadvantage by supporting the functioning of the family unit.

The Centre provides services and supports to families, lone parents, men, women, youth, older people and others in need of support. Over time the Centre has expanded and now provides space for other services, for example Citizens Information Centre, National Advocacy Service, Social Prescribing Drop In Service. It is a 'One Stop Shop' which provides a vast range of supports and services under one roof.

## Our Values



Respect - We respect individuals, diversity, culture and voice.



Empowerment- We believe in empowering and supporting individuals to meet their own needs



Quality Service Provision

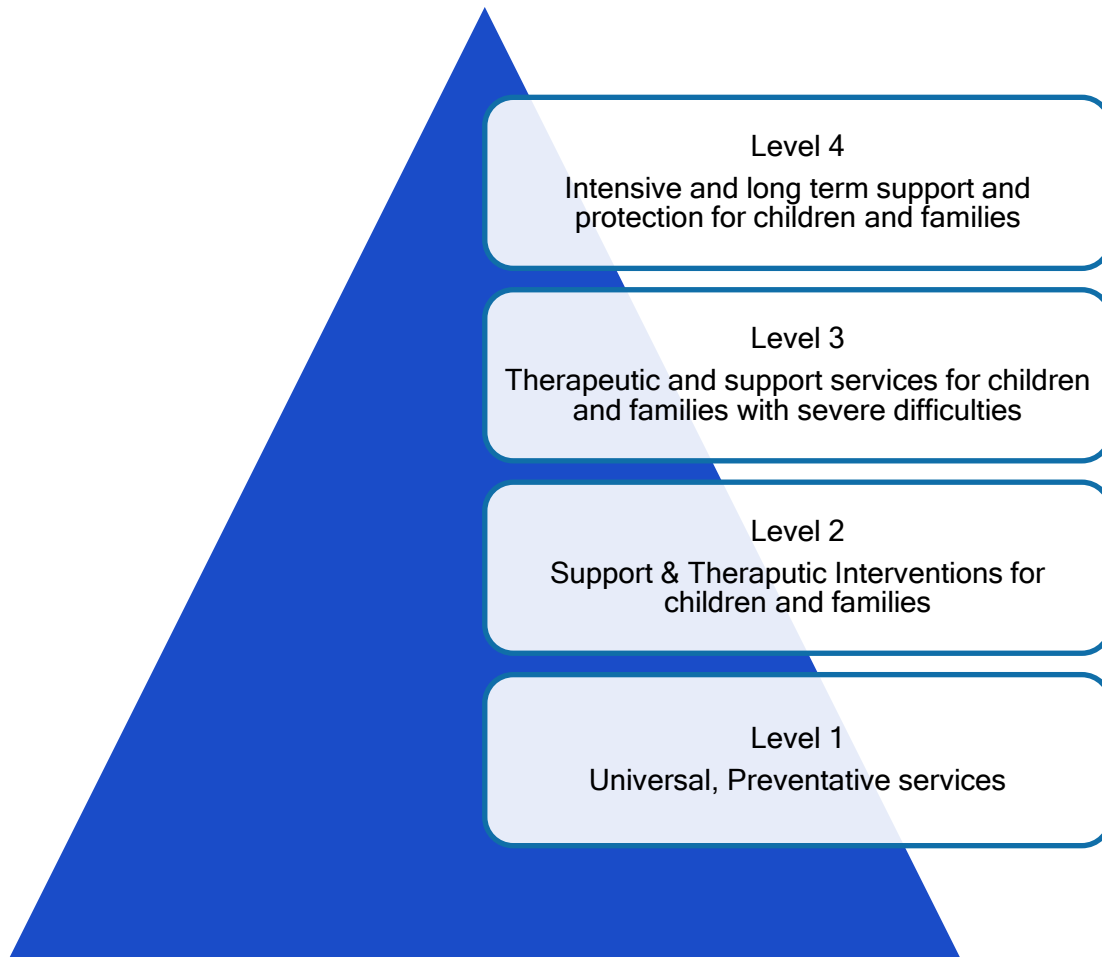


Relationship Building & Trust

*Our Mission is 'Supporting families and individuals in the community to identify their family and local needs; to develop together holistic responses and improve participation in wider community life'*

## Child & Family Support Services

An important aspect of all of the supports offered in St Brigid's is that they are community based with a focus on early intervention and prevention. We aim to work with those families on the lower end of the Hardiker model, level 1 & 2 (see diagram below). We work in partnership with families to ensure that supports are provided prior to possible escalation with a focus on supporting them to achieve their family goals. All families are different and we try to ensure that we cater for individual families by offering a range of services to support each individual family's identified needs.



### *Working Online - One to One Family Support*

As a result of Covid-19 a major challenge during 2021 was being unable to work directly with families in St Brigid's Centre or calling to individual families in their own homes to provide one to one and face to face support. In most cases support was offered online to families. This involved the use of platforms such as Zoom and WhatsApp. Family Support Workers were able to offer I.T. Tablet devices for short term loan for such supports as a result of funding received from WWETB for the purchase of devices to support the provision of services. In certain circumstances Family Support Workers did offer face to face support however this was an option only for those families who required a higher level of support and for whom online support was not sufficient or possible.

In total 23 families were supported during 2021. This included families accessing support online and face to face on a weekly basis. Throughout 2021 Family Support staff noticed an increased demand from parents for general information and advice which was delivered by phone

### *First Time Parents & Baby Health & Wellbeing Programme*

This programme was delivered online for the first time in 2021, in total two programmes were delivered during the year. This programme was a joint effort, coordinated by St Brigid's FCC and Barnardos in conjunction with Dungarvan Library. A range of workshops of interest / relevance to first time parents and their baby's health and wellbeing took place over an 8 week period including Caring for Your Baby, Parental Self Care, Speech & Language Therapy, Introduction to Paediatric First Aid, Childcare Options etc. in collaboration with a range of agencies / organisations in the community. Funding for

the First Time Parents & Baby Programme was secured through Dungarvan Library.

Feedback from parents was positive in relation to the use of the online platform with parents stating that having the programme available online made it easier to access in terms of participating from their own homes, which alleviated the stress of getting

**First Time Parents  
&  
Baby Group**

**YOU & YOUR BABY (AGED BIRTH - 1YR)  
ARE INVITED TO A FREE, ONLINE  
GYMBOREE SESSION ON WEDNESDAY  
15TH SEPTEMBER @ 10.30AM**

Gymboree will be a fun, play session with songs, tummytime activities, sound play & bonding with your baby. Hear about our upcoming Parent & Baby Health & Wellbeing programme.

For more information or to book a place, please contact:

- \*Mags, St. Brigid's FCC: (089) 202 7218.  
Email: mags@stbrigidsfcc.ie
- \*Carmel, Barnardos: (086) 060 0564  
Email: carmel.odonovan@barnardos.ie

Parent Feedback

- 'It gave us connections we would ~~never~~ have had during covid'
- 'The play ideas were great as I didn't know what to be doing with my baby'
- 'Talking about weaning made it ~~less~~ daunting for me.'

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Background by Viktor Open Stock

Barnardos  
St Brigid's  
FCC

organised to go to a venue with a young baby. However, a possible 'in person' meet up of participants at some stage during the programme was also seen as beneficial for future programmes. Strong links were developed with other organisations and agencies in the community who delivered workshops during the programme e.g. Waterford Institute of Technology Department of Health Sciences - Nursing & Healthcare, HSE Public Health Nursing & University Hospital Waterford Midwifery Team, Waterford Childcare Committee, Waterford Library Services etc.

### *Rainbows Programme*

The Rainbows Bereavement & Separation programmes which are delivered in St Brigids to children aged between 7-12 years began delivery again in the latter half of 2021. The



Separation Programme was delivered to a group of six 9-10 year olds. This programme provided children with the opportunity to work through some of their worries and fears about the changes in their lives as well as receiving peer support from other children. The group was delivered by two trained volunteers and coordinated by the trained Family Support Worker. We were unable to deliver the

programme for most of 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic therefore there is currently a lengthy waiting list for children in each of the age groups as well as for both programmes. It is hoped that for the year ahead all children still wishing to access the programme will be provided with a space. The programme is in demand and unfortunately there are very few other organisations delivering Rainbows in Waterford City & County. Any child that was eligible to access other support services within St Brigids was referred to the relevant department Parents with concerns about their child's emotional wellbeing were also encouraged to link with their child's school, the local HSE drop-in psychology department and their GP services.

### *Waterford Inner City Parent & Toddler Group*

This group moved online in 2021 with a range of workshops taking place for parents and toddlers on a regular basis. The Parent & Toddler Group successfully met online for the first half of 2021. There was not sufficient uptake from parents for Autumn/Winter 2021 to continue with the group online - this may have been due to 'Zoom fatigue' or changing Covid 19 restrictions. It was also not possible to hold the group 'in person' in its usual venue, Waterford Central Library, for the latter half of 2021 due to Covid 19 restrictions/public health measures. Funding for the Waterford Inner City Parent & Toddler Group was secured through Waterford Childcare Committee and Waterford City & County Council Central Library.

### *Community Play Therapy*

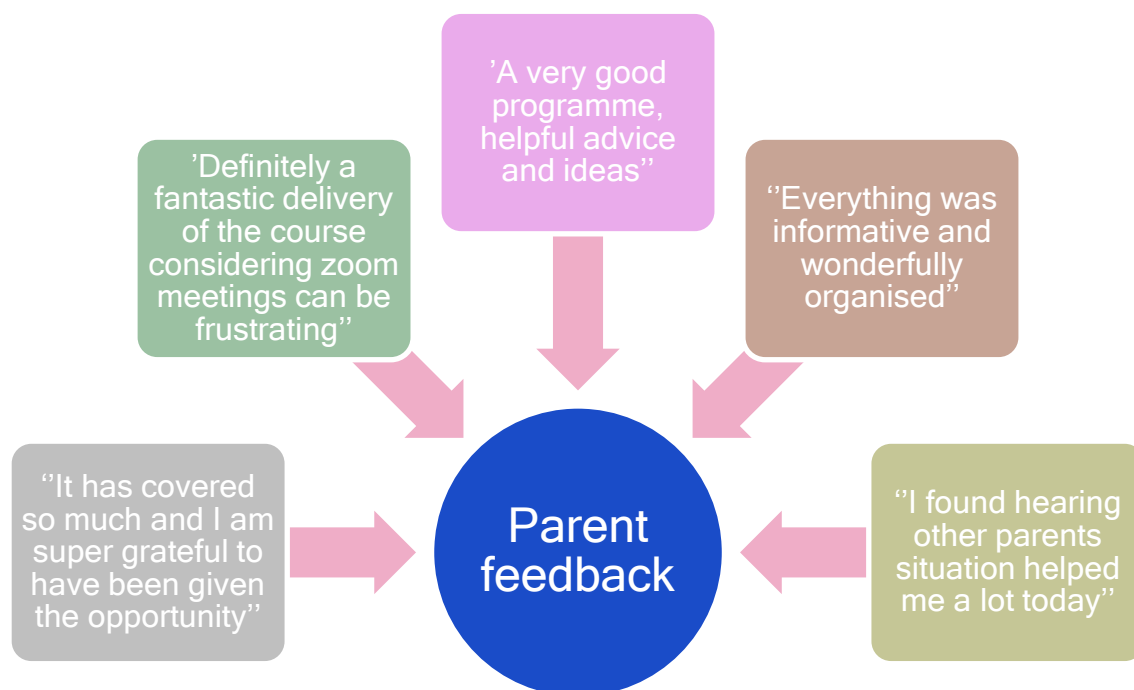
The repurposing of some unspent Tusla funding enabled us to offer Community Play Therapy in-house and to support parents to access Creative Therapies within the community. This initiative facilitated practical collaboration within the Waterford FRC Network which supports cooperation between the three local Family Resource Centres, Brill FRC, Sacred Heart FRC and St. Brigids. It is hoped that ongoing funding will be sourced and the provision of Community Play Therapy and Creative Therapies will continue to form part of the 2022 Annual Action / Operational Plan.

### *Advocacy*

St Brigids continues to advocate on behalf of individuals and families accessing our services. We also support families to access supports and services by signposting families to other services in the community. St. Brigids continues to seek support for families experiencing challenges and unable to access supports or services due to long waiting lists or lack of services. We support families to navigate some of the complex systems in relation to access visits with children, court processes, liaising with other professional bodies as well as providing information and advice.

### Parenting Programmes

St Brigids provides a variety of parenting programmes to support families. Staff are trained in the delivery of Parents Plus Programmes, Mellow Bumps and Triple P Parenting Programme. The Family Support team has also developed the First Time Parents Health & Well Being Programme. Some of these programmes continued to be delivered during 2021. Programme delivery moved online and was delivered via Zoom. Most parents reported that online participation worked well as it reduced childcare, transport and timing issues for them. In general the move online for these programmes proved to be a positive one. From a worker's point of view, despite some initial apprehension, the move to online delivery was generally positive and something which, post-pandemic, will continue to form part of service provision alongside in-house and face to face group programmes. During 2021 three Parents Plus programmes were delivered online, Adolescent Programme, Children's' Programme and Parenting When Separated Programme. A total of 19 parents attended these programmes with positive feedback received across the board.



## *Community Development*

The area of Community Development is an integral part of the work of St Brigids. It has a community focus on empowering individuals and groups within communities to identify their needs and develop a response to those identified needs. The work is carried out with individuals and with groups made up of individuals from the local community.

This area of work was impacted significantly during 2021 due to Covid-19. Many of the local community groups were unable to meet due to the pandemic. While some groups endeavored to resume (in line with government guidelines), further lockdowns, the understandable apprehension of some members to return, and the long gap without attendance all impacted the sustainability of groups in 2021.

During the year the Family Support Team maintained some contact with members of different groups. This contact was mostly via phone and was a way of staying connected with those attending community groups pre-pandemic.

### *Friday Coffee Morning Group*

This social and wellbeing group finally resumed meeting in St. Brigids in late autumn 2021 in adherence with Covid-19 restrictions/public health measures including maintaining pods of 4 during group meetings, mask wearing and hand sanitizing. Some participants who previously attended the Friday Coffee Morning Group did not return when it resumed meeting in late 2021. This may have been due to a various factors including concerns in relation to Covid-19 or changed personal circumstances. The resumption of the meeting 'in person' in the Centre in Autumn/Winter 2021 helped to alleviate social isolation amongst older women in the community. This group is currently self-sustaining due to group member's weekly voluntary contributions for the running of the group.

### *Intergenerational Group*

Unfortunately the Intergenerational Group, which brings together the older and younger generations to work on projects and bridge the gap between the generations, was unable to meet given Covid 19 restrictions/public health measures and the range of ages

(younger and older people) within the group. The Intergenerational Group is a joint initiative between Waterford Inner City Community Youth Project and St Brigid's. St Brigid's Family Support Worker maintained contact by phone with the older adults, and the Community Youth Project Worker kept in contact with the younger people in the group. Group participants undertook a letter writing and photography activity during 2020 in their own homes, recording their experience of Covid restrictions and lockdowns. It is hoped that when the group resumes to meet in person it will be possible to share the letters and photos amongst the group members thereby strengthening connections within the group again. Hopefully it will be possible for the group to meet 'in person' in 2022 and additional funding can be sought to undertake any particular projects of interest to the group.

### *I.T. & Computer Skill*

A new project designed to Upskill Adults in the Community in I.T./Computer Skills was delivered in 2021 in conjunction with WWETB. This was in response to a need amongst adults (particularly older adults) in the community in relation to having access to and upskilling in using Tablet Devices and accessing the Internet. In collaboration with Access IT a number of classes took place for older adults in the use of Tablets and how to access the Internet. Participants also had the option of availing of the Tablet Loan Device Scheme within St. Brigid's which ensured that a lack of IT devices did not prevent individuals from accessing this support.

### *Women's Health & Well Being Group*

St Brigid's long running Health & Well Being Group for Women unfortunately only managed to have a brief return during 2021 once Covid 19 restrictions allowed. The group did try to get re-established, however returning numbers were low, and given the time of year, (late November), and high Covid case numbers, not all members returned. The group decided in mid-December to postpone the return of the group until 2022 with a view to recruiting new members.

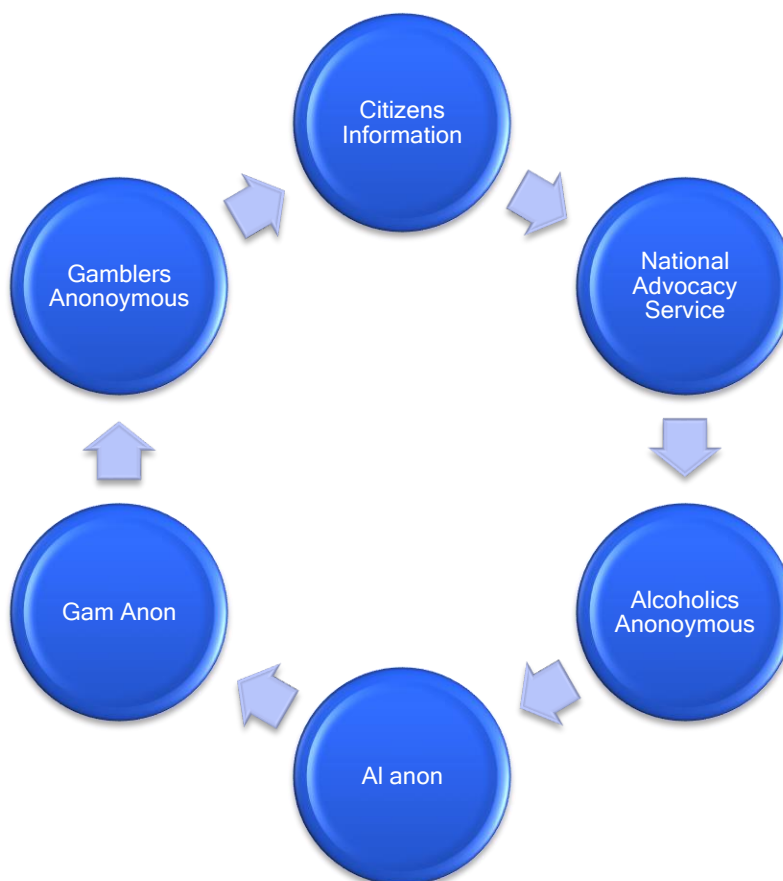
### *Chair Based Yoga*

The Chair Based Yoga Group with a focus on mobility and wellbeing has become one of the most popular and oversubscribed groups in the Centre. Currently two groups run

concurrently on a weekly basis. The group returned in October 2021 with reduced numbers. Feedback was very positive with participants being relieved to see classes resuming and eager to resume their exercise and improve their mobility. The classes continued until December when unfortunately Covid interrupted the final few weeks. The group will resume again in 2022.

### *Other Community Supports*

A number of different community support services are also based in St Brigids providing valuable supports to the community. The location of these additional support services within St Brigids enables individuals to access a range of supports under one roof. Unfortunately due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic many of these additional community services were unable to meet. For those wishing to access support from these services St Brigids provided the local or regional contact details and any other additional information available. It is hoped all community services will resume in 2022.



## *Portlaw Community Resource Hub*

Portlaw Community Resource Hub @ Clodiagh House is an initiative funded by Tusla and operated by St Brigid's Family and Community Centre which provides an alternative model of family support and community development provision in a rural area, Portlaw Co Waterford, through a combination of outreach work and co-location. Portlaw Community Resource Hub has been in development since May 2015.

2021 saw some changes to the staff team. Carmel Connolly, the former Senior Resource Hub Family Support Worker and the initial worker geared with the task of developing the Resource Hub in 2015, stepped down from her position. This position has been replaced with a new 3 day position which was taken up by Patricia Barrett and will allow the opportunity to develop new and additional services in the Resource Hub. Yvette Aylward, who worked alongside Carmel Connolly as Family Support/Community Development Worker in the development of the Hub, also resigned from her position in September 2021 and was replaced by Pyper Ludlow in late 2021. St Brigids would like to wish Yvette all the best in her future endeavors and welcome both Patricia and Pyper to the St Brigids team.

Portlaw Community Resource hub provides support to families in the Portlaw area. This is done through

- One to One support,
- Access, referral and provision of further services such as Play Therapy, Creative Therapies and Counselling.
- Supporting community initiatives such as Allotments, Women's Group, Parent's Support Group, Men's Shed, Parent & Toddler Group, Outreach Office for Information & Support,
- Formal and informal training and education, outreach information and advice

During 2021 a number of new initiatives took place;

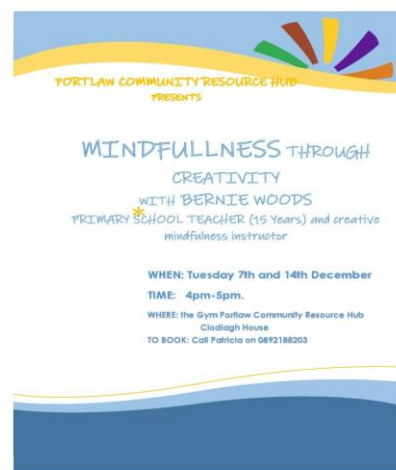
- Training of new staff in Parents Plus Parenting Programmes
- Support group for parents with children who have additional needs
- Mindfulness through Creativity, an accredited programme which introduces mindfulness to children in fun and creative ways. .
- Women's Craft Group

- The establishment of a weekly outreach office in the center of Portlaw
- The development of an enhanced outdoor communal and meeting space
- Foroige Just Grow Project, an initiative that offers 6 week growing programmes to families.
- Initial development plans for an intergenerational garden
- Ongoing engagement with the local Scout Group, Portlaw National School and the Dr. Martin Day Centre

Covid 19 continued to impact service provision during 2021, there was less visibility in the community due to less events, meetings and face to face supports taking place. However the Resource Hub tried to continue to find ways of supporting groups and individuals to access supports and services. Groups found new ways to meet, exchange support and take care of their mental wellbeing. The outdoor space was enhanced providing a safe space for groups to meet, and one to one support became phone support at times in order to continue to provide support to those families and individuals who required information and support.

During 2021 the Resource Hub noted an increased demand for some services including greater demand for parent support, supports for children with additional needs and access to Play and Creative Therapy and Counselling services.

The Resource Hub secured funding for new programmes during 2021. Funding was secured for the delivery of an education programme for women, and for the re-establishment of the Parent & Toddler Group.



In relation to challenges for the Resource Hub, there is a need for funding, physical space and service provision to respond to and meet the needs of parents of children who have additional needs and also to support the children themselves.

It has also been identified that due to large numbers of social groups accessing the services and space within the Resource Hub, at times it can be challenging to manage

different dynamics, however the Family Support Team are constantly mindful of this and are exploring ways to manage and work with groups and individuals to ensure the Resource Hub provides a safe, secure and happy environment for all.



Portlaw Allotments was able to continue offering space and support to all of its members during 2021

The Boules group finally got the chance to meet during 2021. The group were grateful for the good weather.



St Brigids would like to thank Yvette for all of her work in supporting the development of Portlaw Community Resource Hub. We wish Yvette well in her future endeavours.

The Resource Hub hopes to be back working at full capacity in 2022 and that the Hub will continue to develop its services and supports to the local community.

## COUNSELLING SERVICES

St Brigids provides a comprehensive, affordable and accessible Counselling Service:

- [Adult Counselling](#)
- [Relationship Counselling](#)
- [Adolescent Counselling](#)

The Counselling Service caters for the wider community covering a catchment area across the County. The sliding fee scale makes the service accessible to all regardless of their income level.

During 2021 Noeleen Murphy, Counselling Co-ordinator retired from St Brigids. Having prior experience as a volunteer and employee of St Brigids Counselling Service, Chartered Psychologist Dr. Eamonn Meaney, took up the role of Counselling Co-ordinator in July 2021. Primary emphasis was placed upon consolidating and building upon the framework established by Noeleen Murphy. At this point, the Counselling team consisted of two part-time Counsellors, funded through a TUSLA Counselling Grant, and an additional four volunteer Counsellors. Both paid Counsellors specialise in Child and Adolescent Counselling, working with populations aged eleven to seventeen, for issues such as parental separation, bereavement, anxiety, body image, loss, self-harm, suicidal ideation, bullying, and other relationship based issues. One Counsellor also offers Relationship Counselling which supports couples and individuals whose relationships are in difficulty.

Volunteer Counsellors worked within the Adult Counselling Service with clients experiencing anxiety and stress of work and family related issues, depression, loss/bereavement, self-esteem, parenting, and health issues.

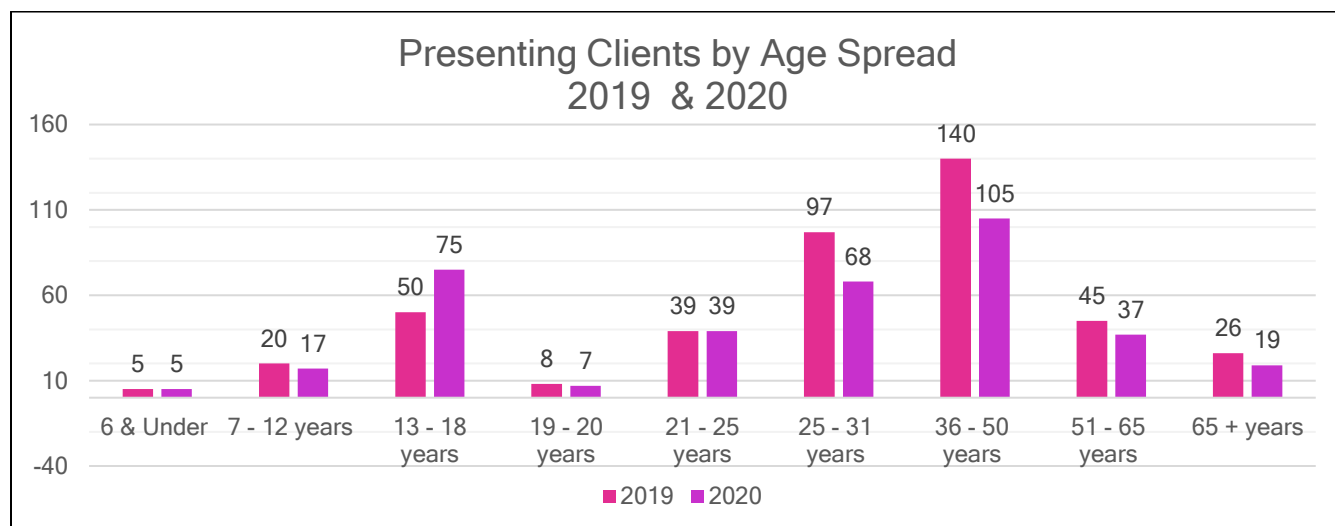
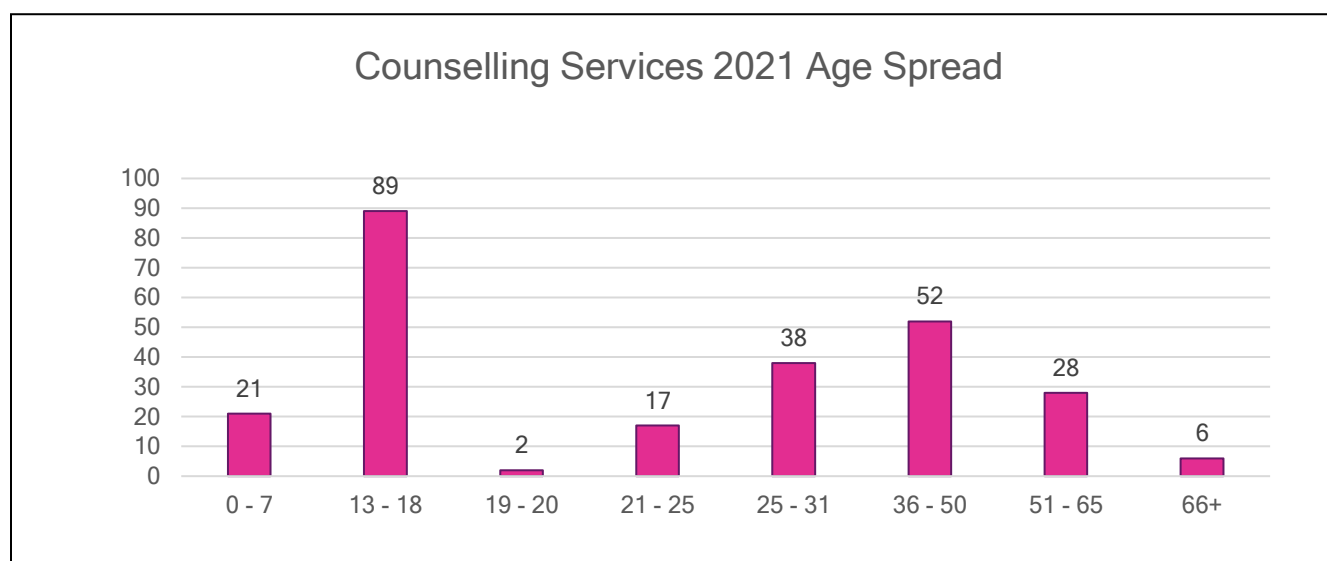
Whilst some Adolescent Counselling had already resumed in person in St Brigids Centre across September and October, measures were put in place to facilitate the return of adults and couples to the Centre for face-to-face therapy. Given the prevalence of the Covid-19 virus, Counsellors were therefore familiarised with protocols for working with clients within the Centre, whilst air purifiers and freestanding anti-bacterial screens were introduced to prioritise the safety of all within the therapeutic environments. During the final quarter of the year one volunteer left the team, whilst another stepped out for

personal reasons. Two new volunteers commenced with a further three volunteers recruited to begin Counselling in early 2022. Monthly supervisions continue to be delivered remotely by Noeleen Murphy and Mary Lyng.

Intake processes and the delivery and structure of the service were reviewed, and this process remains ongoing. For example, each member of the Counselling team was allocated a new St Brigids email address. There are multiple benefits from implementing this action, such as increased professionalism, improved security, and allowing Counsellors to forward relevant materials or links to clients in a boundaried fashion. Moreover, linking St Brigid's emails to their phones has meant that Therapists can be made aware of cancellations directly from clients, enabling them to take responsibility for rescheduling appointments and/or heading off "dead slots" in their working week. The provision of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshops for members of the Counselling team has been a mainstay for many years. Commensurately, seven individuals attended a three day programme on Critical Incident Stress Management in November, and means of integrating associated learnings are being considered within the service.

Previously, the screening and intake of clients was carried out by nine members of the Resource and Referral team. Relatedly, a new Community Employment post was created and initiated in December 2021. Overseen by CE Supervisor Brendan Power, this Admin Support position incorporates carrying out general administrative duties, undertaking client intakes, reporting clinical issues to the Counselling Co-ordinator, distribution of information to the general public and/or signposting to appropriate services, as well as ensuring compliance with GDPR regulations in relation to this position. St Brigids Counselling Service has also benefitted from the purchase of three new laptops for two employees and the Admin Support worker, and two new phones, one each for the Counselling Co-ordinator and Admin Support Worker. It is anticipated that these will support the day to day running of the service, as well as aiding its future development. Upon resumption of in person therapy, there was an initial surge in demand for services, with intakes for September until the year end numbering 152 in total - 95 individuals accessing Adult Counselling, 53 individuals accessing Adolescent Counselling, and 4 individuals accessing relationship counselling. In total the number of adults and adolescent accessing therapy services in 2021 was 253. It is also interesting to note that

demand for services in the younger age groups of 11-18 years has increased dramatically year on year between 2019 and 2021, whereas there has been a decline in adults aged between 36-50 years accessing therapeutic services within St Brigid's. Towards the end of 2021 an initiative between the National FRC Forum and the Gambling Awareness Trust enabled St. Brigid's to submit a successful funding application to deliver specific counselling to individuals experiencing problem gambling and their families. This service will commence in 2022 with the recruitment of a suitable Counsellor, thus adding to the existing suite of Counselling services available in St. Brigid's.



St. Brigid's Counselling Service continues to receive Tusla funding towards the operation of the Counselling service including the employment of two part time Counsellors and a Counselling Coordinator, staff supervision, training and associated overheads. In 2021 additional funding was accessed to provide I.T. equipment. It is anticipated that the shortfall in funding is met by the surplus income generated by St. Brigid's Charity Shops.

## COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT

The Community Employment (CE) Scheme is designed to support individuals who are long- term unemployed to return to work by offering part-time and temporary placements in jobs based within local communities. Brendan Power is the Community Employment Scheme Supervisor, Brendan has been the supervisor for 30+ years and provides support and supervision to all of the Community Employment Participants .The scheme is funded through the Department of Social Protection. St Brigid's has 24 places on the scheme which are spread across a number of areas within St. Brigid's as well as other partner organisations.

In 2021

- St Brigid's FCC had two positions, one Cleaning and one Counselling Admin
- St Brigid's Children Centre had one position for Receptionist/Administration.
- St. Brigid's Shops provided seven shop assistants positions as well as a Van Driver and Assistant.
- Portlaw Community Resource Hub, Clodiagh House, Portlaw benefitted from a Maintenance Person.
- Children's Group Link provided positions in Administration, Maintenance & Social Enterprise Administration.
- Tintean Housing Association had a Cleaning Assistant position, Maintenance Person, Administration and Youth Programme Planning Assistant.
- N.C.B.I. provided a Shop Assistant position.
- Citizens Information Service had three Information Assistants employed to work in the service.



During 2021 the Scheme added a new position, with one of the participants taking up the role of Admin Support for St Brigid's Counselling Service. This new place will give the participant concerned, valuable experience in dealing with the public by phone and in person. It also provides the Counselling Service with important intake and admin back up to allow the service to function in a compliant and efficient manner.

The scheme experienced a number of challenges during 2021 due to the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic. Participants on the C.E. scheme were unable to work in the first four months of the year. Covid 19 also had an impact on the recruitment of new participants to the scheme as the D.S.P. referral process was not fully functioning during the lockdowns. This has resulted in fewer candidates being referred for C.E. positions and the delay in filling vacancies. Training moving on line provided benefits for some participants as it gave them more flexibility to access training but left others struggling to adapt. Certified training is an integral part of the Scheme. During 2021, 28 participants achieved 19 minor QQI awards and 1 major award. In addition to this, participants achieved 15 industry standard awards to include E.C.D.L Computer Training and HACCP Food Safety. The participants also completed 21 uncertified training courses. In relation to the progression of participants, 6 participants left the scheme with 3 securing employment and 1 going on to full time education. This represents a progression rate of 66%. This is above the D.S.P. target of 50%. Although the Community Employment Scheme aims to activate those long term unemployed by providing training and upskilling, the benefits of these positions in local community far outweighs job activation. The schemes supports the day to day functioning of community organisations. In her report in 2021 Minister Humphries acknowledged the importance of these schemes and benefits to community organisations.

*"I have long been of the view that programmes like CE cannot be viewed solely as a job activation measure, there are also huge societal benefits from the good work carried out in local communities by these schemes"*  
 Minister Humphries for both Social Protection & Rural and Community Development Dec 2021



## ST BRIGIDS CHARITY SHOPS

St Brigid's have two Charity Shops. The shops provide valuable income which helps support the delivery of other services within St Brigids Family & Community Centre, notably the Counselling Services. Each item donated to St. Brigid's Charity Shops is vital to the shops' success and provides necessary income to be able to provide services to individuals within the community. We are lucky to have been able to build good relationships with the community to ensure that donations continue to be received. Despite providing an essential service to customers with limited or no disposable income and those without means to shop online, Charity Shops were deemed non-essential in line with government restrictions. Our shops closed on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2020 and did not trade with open doors for a further 20 weeks, reopening in May 2021. During this time we maintained the employment relationship with the shops as St Brigids was able to access the Government's Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme which was an important enabler to support the shops through the pandemic. The closure of our retail shops on foot of public health measures posed a particular challenge in terms of loss of income and ongoing overheads.



The shops also provide valuable volunteering opportunities for all ages in the community, along with offering placements for people through the Community Employment Scheme. The work carried out by volunteers and those on the CE scheme is truly invaluable and the shops would not be the success they are without these individuals. Social media has also played a vital role in the success of our charity shops in particular during closures in 2021. Our social media presence ([www.facebook.com/St-Brigids-Charity-Shops](http://www.facebook.com/St-Brigids-Charity-Shops)) is important in highlighting the shops, recruiting volunteers and advertising positions, as well as providing an opportunity to showcase the range of items available in the shops, special promotions and requests for support. Many sales have been made using this mode of advertising.



During 2021 our longest serving staff member Rose retired after 30 years working with St Brigid's. Her wealth of experience will certainly be missed.

We wish Rose all the best on her retirement and thank her for her service.

A taste of some of the great items available within our stores.

Christmas Campaign to encourage local shopping and highlighting the wonderful items which can be found and reimagined within the shops.

We constantly keep our shop windows updated and themed. This gives us the opportunity to highlight the items available within the store.

Campaigns to encourage donations to the shops and highlighting where the shops income is spent.

To try to combat the impact of Covid 19, a number of new initiatives were established.

- Click & Collect System while shops were closed. Our social media sites allowed us to highlight what was available in the shops and offer a safe system whereby sales could still be made.
- A Donation Drop Off Service was advertised through local radio, social media, community notes and local newspapers in order to continue to be able to receive donations and keep stock up to date.
- Online sales of books, fashion and Bric a Brac with our partners on [www.thrifty.ie](http://www.thrifty.ie).

These initiatives were successful in ensuring St Brigid's Charity Shops continued to engage with our customers.

In preparation for our reopening there were a number of guidelines which needed to be adhered to and a range of measures were introduced in line with government guidelines in order to safeguard our staff, our volunteers and our customers.

- Online HSA Staff Return to Work Safely Course was completed by all
- Hand Sanitizing stations were installed
- Social distancing measures were enforced
- Quarantine period for donations received was introduced for a period of 24 hours.

St Brigids Charity Shops are grateful to all of the donations received into the shops and wish to thank all those who continued to support the shops throughout the year.

## ST BRIGIDS CHILDREN CENTRE

St. Brigid's Children Centre offers part time, full time and sessional care and education to children from 1 year to 10 years in a nurturing child-centred environment staffed by qualified, experienced and dedicated staff. Our Children Centre is located on Hennessy's Road in Waterford and is a purpose built facility. The Centre comprises of 7 play rooms, a sensory room and a spacious central atrium. There is also a large secure outdoor space which is available for use by the children and provides ample opportunity for outdoor play and for a range of activities for the children.

As was seen in previous years, demand for full time care was very low with only 1 child requiring this service. In the case of our part time service, 59 children from 1 year to 3+ years attended in 2021. The part time service operates from 9am to 12.45 and from 1.30pm to 5.15pm



Throughout 2021 two Pre-schools groups delivered Early Years Care and Education to a total of 68 children. The service operates for 15 hours a week for 38 weeks per year, in line with the primary school academic year. Children could avail of additional hours if required. The service is available to children from 2 years and 8 months up to school age.



St. Brigid's Afterschool Services offers homework support and opportunities for social interaction and play to school aged children up to 10 years of age. In 2021 a total of 34 children attended our Afterschool Service. The service operated 5 afternoons a week for 42 weeks a year.

During the Covid-19 pandemic it was identified that there was a need for a new way to communicate with parents. Although a text and WhatsApp service was in place, it was felt that we needed another means of communication in particular for the parents of our one to three year old children. An online system called Teachkloud was introduced. This has been a great addition to the service. It allows staff and parents to have constant communication and allows staff to upload pictures onto the Parent App. Parents only have access to information and pictures relating to their own children. This is a great benefit particularly when children are settling in during August and September.



In January 2021 it was announced by government that all Early Years and School Age Services were only allowed offer services to children of parents who were deemed essential workers or those children who may be vulnerable. All ECCE services were suspended and did not re-open until Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March. All other services were again subject to the rule that children could only attend if they were vulnerable or if their parents were deemed essential workers. In order to maintain contact with parents and children activity packs were put together for all children and were delivered by John Nolan and

Mary O'Brien to the children's homes throughout the months of January and February. All of our ECCE services had to remain closed until 8<sup>th</sup> March and this impacted a large group of children. Our service reopened fully on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> April.

We had our first Covid-19 case confirmed in the Children Centre in June 2021. This impacted on our Garden Room. As all children and staff were deemed close contacts, the room remained closed for 10 days. In the later months of 2021, from September onwards, we saw a rise in the number of Covid cases in the service. In September it resulted in the closure of our Jungle Room for 10 days. Subsequently changes to close contact rules were introduced which resulted in rooms remaining open in the event of a positive case of Covid-19. However keeping rooms fully open was dependent on staff availability. It was then decided that rather than imposing a blanket closure in the event of staff non-availability, to offer all children reduced days until a full service resumed.

*'The Children Centre provides high quality childcare that is accessible, affordable and inclusive in a child centered environment where children have fun, play and learn under the care of the professional staff'*

Demand for services in 2021 was reflective of previous years with very little demand for our full time services however demand increased for our 1-2 year old room. In 2021 demand for our 2-3 year old room returned to pre Covid-19 levels. September 2021 saw an increase in demand for ECCE from local Traveller families. The Children Centre operates a minibus to support Traveller families who require transport. We had 14 children requiring the service of the bus in September 2021.

In response to the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on childcare services the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS) remained in place for all of 2021. Changes were due to occur in December 2021 but the Minister announced that the enhanced rates would continue until the end of January 2022.

In June 2021 the Children Centre received Pobal Outdoor Grant 2021 Funding of €2000. This funding was used to purchase outdoor kitchens and picnic tables for the garden and we also installed artificial grass in 2 separate areas. In December 2021 we received funding to install air purifying systems to further safeguard our staff & children while attending the services

In 2021 a new funding stream was announced by the Minister for Children which will introduce new core funding which will take effect from September 2022. Providers will be eligible to access this new funding stream to help cover increased operating costs linked to quality improvement measures. This additional funding will support Early Learning Children (ELC) and School Aged Children (SAC) providers to attract and retain staff, including degree-qualified staff, and will support the Programme for Government commitment in relation to drawing up of an Employment Regulation Order for the 30,000 staff in the sector. In return for this investment, a commitment will be sought from providers not to increase parents' fees for ELC and SAC. This is a positive move for our sector and a step in the right direction. But as always it will be interesting to see the finer details of this funding model.

During 2021 we were extremely lucky to have relatively low numbers of cases of Covid 19 in our service. This is in part due to our strict policy on the use of pods and the vigilance of staff. Throughout 2021 in order to limit opportunity for infection, staff could only work



within two play pods and the pods never mixed. All staff in the Children Centre are to be commended for their hard work, dedication and support throughout 2021. The Children Centre is the success it is today because of the staff team who take great pride in the Centre and also in providing an excellent support service to the children and families that attend.

In June 2021 we held our first session of Gymboree of 2021. Gymboree is a play and music programme designed to build creativity and confidence and to support learning. It was great to have Audrey from Gymboree back in the service and the

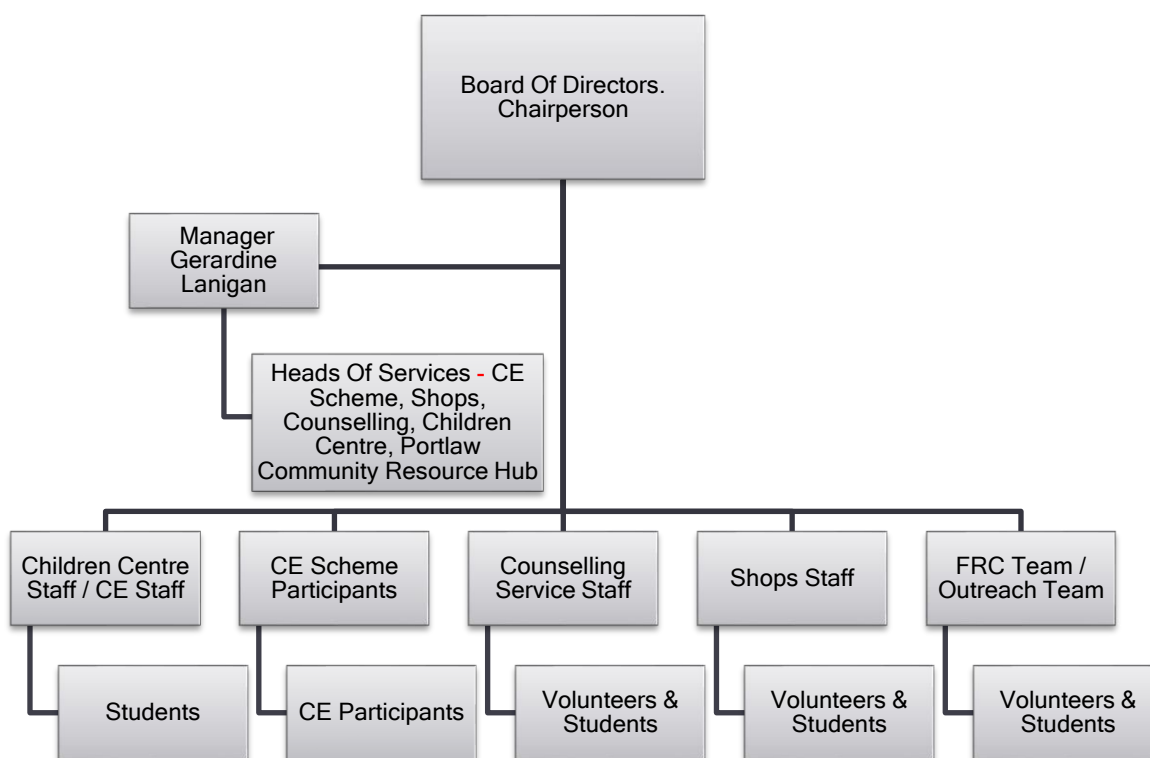
children and staff were delighted to see Gymboree return. From September 2021 Gymboree was included in our curriculum with monthly sessions taking place.

For the first time since 2019 we held our Summer Camp to full capacity with 28 children attending. This was a great success and the children and staff all enjoyed the 7 weeks of camp. We welcomed children back to the service some whom we had not seen since 2019.

In mid-2021 the Children Centre engaged the services of external specialists, Trauma Responsive Education, to provide monthly Trauma Informed Reflective Supervision to support staff in their role. The feedback from staff was very positive and this support continues to be available into 2022.

St Brigids Children Centre aims to continue to provide a high quality service for all children, parents and families during 2022.

## Structure & Governance



Over the course of late 2020 / early 2021 the Board of St. Brigids engaged the services of John Warren Consulting to provide support and training in relation to achieving full compliance with the Charities Regulator's Charities Governance Code. The Code sets out the required standards for effective management of a Charity. Unfortunately an anticipated full day Board training event for early 2021 was not possible due to ongoing Covid-19 concerns. This event has been postponed to June 2022.

The Board continued to review policies and procedures throughout 2021 including engaging the services of Margaret Julian, GDPR Consultant, to review and audit GDPR policy across the organisation.

## Annual Action Plan, Outcomes & Objectives

St Brigid's Family & Community Centre sets out six key outcomes in its Annual Action Plan. Each of these outcomes is linked with a set of objectives for delivery of services. The Action Plan guides the work of St Brigid's FCC throughout the year so that as an organisation we can ensure the needs of the community of Waterford City & County are being met.

<p>That children, families &amp; individuals feel empowered in relation to their holistic health &amp; wellbeing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To continue to deliver a Women's Health Programme</li> <li>◆ Participation on The Community Health Network</li> <li>◆ Delivery of Chair Based Yoga Classes for older women in the community</li> <li>◆ To provide a range of Counselling to meet the community need</li> <li>◆ To engage with the Tusla Therapeutic Team Manager and Tusla Play Therapy Service to access Play Therapy, for families referred to St. Brigid's.</li> <li>◆ To provide Rainbows, a bereavement / loss developmental programme for children ranging in age from 7 upwards.</li> <li>◆ To promote positive Infant Mental Health and Holistic Health and Wellbeing for New Parents</li> <li>◆ To deliver a pilot Waterford Wellbeing Digital Champions Programme</li> <li>◆ Upskilling Adults in the Community in I.T./ Computer Skills</li> </ul>
<p>That parents &amp; grandparents/carers gain support in relation to their parenting role and the wellbeing of their children and family</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To provide Parents Plus Parenting programmes for parents, grandparents, carers.</li> <li>◆ To deliver The Mellow Bumps programme for parents-to-be</li> <li>◆ To deliver the First Time Parent and Baby Wellbeing Programmes online</li> <li>◆ To provide support to 8-10 parents at any given time during the year</li> <li>◆ To facilitate and develop the Inner City Parent and Toddler Group</li> <li>◆ To support parents to access relevant supports, in-house and via signposting</li> </ul>

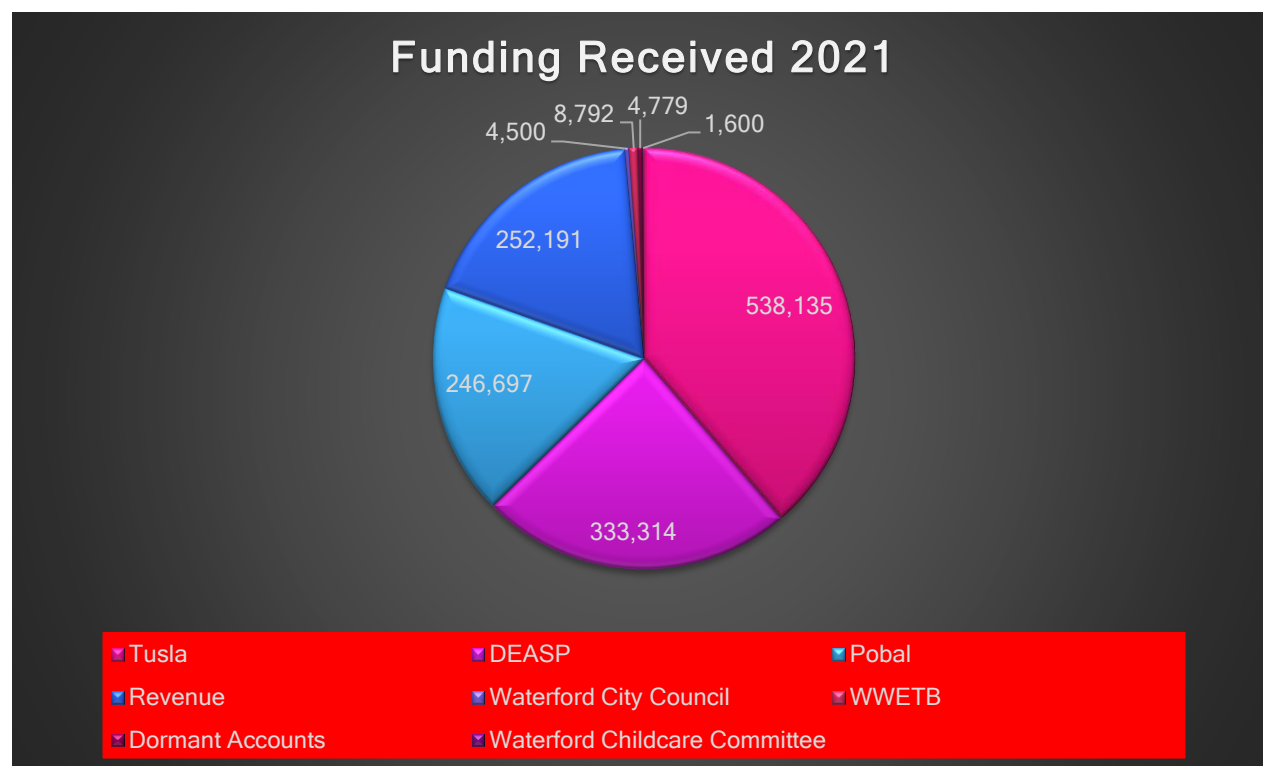
<p>That families and individuals are connected and included in their community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To facilitate the Friday Coffee Morning Group</li> <li>◆ To facilitate the Intergenerational Group in conjunction with the Waterford Inner City Community Youth Project</li> <li>◆ To continue to hold &amp; coordinate community &amp; social events throughout the year</li> <li>◆ To continue to provide resources and supports to local Groups &amp; Individuals</li> </ul>
<p>That families and individuals gain the opportunity for personal development and enhance their ability to access education, volunteering and employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To continue to host the Community Employment Scheme</li> <li>◆ To continue to run two Charity Shops (clothing and furniture) to provide additional income for St Brigid's FCC</li> </ul>
<p>That local issues identified by the community are highlighted at local, regional and national decision making structures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To maintain involvement in local networks</li> <li>◆ To maintain the provision of St. Brigid's Community Children Centre which provides affordable, accessible and inclusive childcare.</li> </ul>
<p>To strategically plan and coordinate the Organisation's ongoing development through the provision of relevant training, access to appropriate networks and ongoing policy reviews and updates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To continue to promote the collective vision of the Centre.</li> <li>◆ Implement the Annual Operational Plan</li> <li>◆ Improve internal / external communication, including meetings, websites, social media and brochures</li> <li>◆ To continue to provide training and development opportunities for staff, Board and volunteers</li> <li>◆ To continue to host the 5 positions for the Therapeutic Team for Wexford / Waterford area in conjunction with Tusla</li> <li>◆ To continue the development of an outreach family support model based in Portlaoighaire to serve the mid-county</li> <li>◆ To continue involvement and progress work in the following areas: CYPSC, Restorative Practice Network, Child and Family Support Network, Local Area Network Opposing Violence Against Women, Waterford Traveller Interagency Group, Parenting Support Champion, South East FRC Forum, Waterford FRC Network, FRC National Forum, PPFS, CFSN</li> </ul>

### *Performance Indicators*

SPEAK is the national system, commissioned by Tusla, to collate qualitative and quantitative information about the 121 Family Resource Centres (FRCs) across Ireland. This system supported St. Brigids to track services delivered to a number of beneficiaries throughout 2021. Data was inputted throughout the year on the 'cradle to grave' services being delivered by St. Brigids based on the 2021 Annual Action Plan Objectives. Quantitative information gathered included the numbers of individuals accessing services, their age range and gender, the range of services delivered and the number of service hours provided. Qualitative data included feedback on issues experienced throughout the year. In 2021 the key focus continued to be on the impact of Covid-19, its impact on programme and service delivery and the measures implemented to provide ongoing support to individuals, families, children and groups.

## Financial Review

St Brigids is a Registered Charity and receives core funding and once off funding through a number of government departments for the provision of family support and community services in Waterford City and County



St Brigids FRC is part of the National Family Resource Centre Programme which is core funded through TUSLA Child & Family Agency. In 2021 St Brigids received a total of 538,135 in funding through the TUSLA Child & Family Agency. This income makes up approximately 40% of the overall income for St Brigids and is allocated to FRC staffing costs, part funding the Counselling Services, outreach work in Portlaw Community Resource Hub, Community Play Therapy and hosting staff for the Tusla Therapeutic Team. In late 2021 Tusla granted an additional €26,805 (5% of all Tusla funding received in 2020) in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This funding provided an opportunity to develop and enhance an outdoor space and provide air purifiers for our indoor spaces.

St Brigids Community Employment Scheme received €331,314 from the Department of Employment and Social Protection (DESP) in 2021 to fund wage costs, training and materials for scheme participants and the CE Supervisor.

In 2021 St Brigids Children Centre received €246,697 from Pobal / Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to fund the operation of the service. The Children Centre also received support through Revenue's Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme. In total €252,191 was accessed by St. Brigids through Revenue to mitigate against the impact of Covid-19 on income, and to support the retention of staff in both the Children Centre and also in St. Brigid's Charity Shops.

St Brigids also received funding through a variety of other agencies and organisations throughout the year. Generally this funding was secured for the delivery or development of specific programmes, supports and services. During 2021 St Brigids received €4,779 through Dormant Accounts which was used to upgrade the WIFI system throughout the Centre, ensuring that it is more accessible and efficient for staff and service users. €8,792 was granted through WWETB for the delivery of a Community Education Programme in Portlaw Community Resource Hub, however, due to Covid-19 restrictions, this was delayed, but it is planned to commence in 2022. Through National Lottery Funding St Brigids received €4,370 to upgrade IT Equipment and also support the delivery of our Counselling Service. €4,500 was received from the Local Authority for Covid rates rebate for St. Brigids Charity Shops. Waterford Childcare Committee provided €1,600 for delivery of two Parent & Toddler Groups, one in Portlaw Community Resource Hub and one in Central Library.

All of the funding received supports the delivery of supports and services within Waterford City & County.

St Brigids would like to thank all of our funders, without whom services and supports could not be delivered.

## *Board of Directors*

St Brigid's Board of Directors is made up of six local community members. St. Brigid's has a Board recruitment process which seeks qualified candidates with a diverse range of skills. All Board members participate in an induction programme which is a structured way of providing them with all the information and support they need to be confident and productive in their role. The aim is to help new board members to understand the organisation, the environment in which it operates, and their role in making the organisation a success. Board members adhere to St. Brigid's Code of Conduct for Board Members.

The following information gives an insight into the Board of Directors for St Brigid's

- Our chairperson, Mary O' Halloran served as Councilor on Waterford City Council from June 2004, and as Mayor of Waterford City from June 2007 to June 2008. She has served on the board of several charities. Mary became a member of St Brigid's Board as she felt that her experience of serving as member of other Boards and committees would be of benefit to the Centre.
- Treasurer Michele O' Brien Power, brings significant business and financial experience to the Board of St Brigid's and is very cognizant of the work being done within the organisation and its support for the local community.
- Company Secretary, Joan Quinlan was appointed to St Brigid's Board of Directors in 2012. She was a volunteer on the St Brigid's Contact Project and has also volunteered her services at Waterford University Hospital as a Play Assistant on the Paediatric Ward.
- Davin Power, Director, is a local resident, a father of a young family and a Social Care Worker. He is familiar with the challenges experienced by families, individuals and groups within the local community
- Bill Deevy, Director, is a long standing company director who brings his experience of business, finance and management to the Board.
- Frances Roche, Director, is owner and Managing Director of a Waterford training company. Frances joined the Board in 2019 and brought with her valuable insight and experience of people management and programme co-ordination.

- Billy O’Keefe, Director, has worked in the non-profit arena for over 30 years at national and local level and brings that experience to St Brigid’s. Billy joined the Board in 2021 having returned to live in his native Waterford and work as Acting Manager at Cathedral Close Apartments.



St Brigid's Family & Community Centre would like to acknowledge and thank all of our funders who support the work of the Centre.





