



St. Brigid's Family & Community Centre Strategic Plan 2025 - 2029

St Brigid's Family & Community Centre
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TÚSLA
An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

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This Strategic Plan was developed and facilitated by Aoife Collins and Aoife Dowling, Independent Facilitators and Research Consultants. St. Brigid's Family and Community Centre extends its gratitude to all who contributed to both the consultation and strategic planning process, including members of the public, service users, the Board, staff and partner agencies.

Special thanks are also given to the Board and Management team for their collaboration with the consultants throughout the review and planning phases, and to the consultants for their development of this Plan.

It is with great pride that, as Chairperson, I can present the St. Brigid's Family and Community Centre's Strategic Plan 2025–2029.

As we mark over four decades of service in Waterford City, and in Portlaw, this plan reaffirms our enduring commitment to fostering inclusion, empowerment, and wellbeing for individuals, children, and families in our community.

Over the past year, we engaged in a wide-reaching, participatory planning process that reflected the voices of those we serve—community members, service users, staff, volunteers, and our trustees.

Their insights have helped shape a vision that is grounded in both the challenges and the opportunities that define our local context.

This Strategic Plan sets out the key themes that will guide our work over the coming five years. It also outlines clear goals, activities and outcomes aligned with national priorities for children and families, while remaining deeply responsive to the lived realities of our local communities.

On behalf of the Trustees, we extend our deepest thanks to everyone who contributed to this process, particularly those who shared their experiences and aspirations for a better future.

With this Plan, we move forward with renewed purpose—anchored in community, driven by compassion, and committed to meaningful change.

On behalf of St. Brigid's, I invite you to join us in this journey.
William (Billy) O'Keeffe

Chairperson
St. Brigid's Family and Community Centre
July 2025

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St. Brigid’s Family and Community Centre (FCC) supports individuals and families in Waterford Inner City and surrounding areas through a wide range of family and community development services. As one of 121 Family Resource Centres (FRCs) across Ireland, it operates under the National Family and Community-based Support Programme, focused on tackling disadvantage, strengthening families, and promoting inclusion.

Services include:

- A community childcare facility
- Counselling, play therapy, and mental wellbeing supports
- One-to-one and group supports for children, parents, and families
- An outreach service: Portlaw Community Resource Hub
- Two charity shops supporting local services
- A community employment scheme

For more on St. Brigid’s impact, see Chapters 1 and 2 of this plan.

About this Strategic Plan

Between late 2024 and early 2025, St. Brigid’s collaborated with independent consultants in a participatory process to create an evidence-based Strategic Plan for 2025–2029. This involved reviewing progress, clarifying future priorities, and responding to evolving community needs through extensive stakeholder consultations.

This comprehensive multi-stage process included:

- Reviewing St. Brigid’s key achievements, progress and learnings
- Extensive consultations with key stakeholders including community members, service users, staff, volunteers, and board members to assess needs and priorities and ensure the plan is evidence based and responsive to emerging needs
- Strategic planning workshops with key stakeholders to clarify future priorities, agree on strategic goals, objectives, and key activities needed to achieve objectives.

This comprehensive multi-stage process included:

- **Chapter 1:** Overview of St. Brigid’s FCC and the national Family Resource Centre network
- **Chapter 2:** Summary of the internal review process and key learnings
- **Chapter 3:** Socio-demographic profile of the centre’s catchment area
- **Chapter 4:** Key consultation findings from stakeholders and community members
- **Chapter 5:** Strategic goals, objectives, and priority actions for 2025–2029

The plan aligns with the five national outcomes for children and young people, plus two additional themes identified during planning—forming seven core strategic themes. Each includes objectives, success indicators, and key actions, developed in partnership with internal and external stakeholders.



Health & Wellbeing



Learning



Economic Security



Safe & Protected from Harm



Social Participation & Connection



Inclusion, Accessibility
& Outreach



Organisational Development,
Resources & Capacity Building

About St. Brigid's Family & Community Centre

One of three community and family resources centres in County Waterford, St. Brigid's Family and Community Centre (FCC) was established in 1984. In late 2024 it celebrated 40 years serving the needs of individuals, families and groups in Waterford city and surrounding areas.

Over the past 40 years, the organisation has grown significantly—expanding its premises, diversifying its services, and establishing a strong reputation within the local community, and among other agencies and service providers. The Centre currently operates from five premises (including charity shops and a childcare centre). Four are based in Waterford inner city and one is based in Portlaw. It provides services and supports primarily to communities living in Waterford inner city and Portlaw. As of April 2022, the population of Waterford city was 60,079 and Portlaw was 1,881.¹

St. Brigid's Family and Community Centre is committed to developing programmes and activities that respond to the evolving needs of the local community. Through its Family Resource Centre, it offers a range of supports and services guided by the principles of community development and family support, providing information, advice, and practical assistance to community groups.

St. Brigid's Aims & Objectives

The organisation aims to do the following through its work:

- Engage with and listen to local people to understand and respond to their needs, ensuring respect for every individual.
- Use a community development & family support approach to drive social change, promote equality, and enhance social inclusion.
- Support families by addressing the wider social context of challenges, working in partnership to develop solutions based on strengths and needs.

St. Brigid's Mission, Vision and Values

St. Brigid's Vision, Mission, and Values are core guiding principles that will shape and inform the organisation's activities and approach throughout the duration of its new Strategic Plan. These elements were collectively reviewed, discussed, and updated in 2025 as part of an internal review conducted during the Plan's development. For further details, see Chapter 2.

¹ More information available at: <https://data.cso.ie/>



Vision Statement

Working from an ethos of community development, we work to foster a more inclusive, equitable and non-judgemental society in which children and families can thrive and individuals can participate and have a voice in matters affecting them.



Mission Statement

To support children, families and individuals in the community, through identification of needs and the provision of dedicated and integrated services so that empowerment, inclusion and equity are prioritised and championed.



Values

- Respect
- Empowerment
- Social Inclusion
- Trust
- Equity
- Non-judgemental

Services Provided by St. Brigid's FCC

St. Brigid's Children's Centre

St. Brigid's Children's Centre, located in Waterford Inner City, is a purpose built childcare facility offering full-time, part-time, and sessional care for children aged one year to primary school age, plus out-of-school care up to 10 years old.

An experienced and dedicated staff team facilitates a child-centred, inclusive and nurturing environment which promotes active learning, play and holistic development.

St. Brigid's Counselling Service

St. Brigid's Family and Community Centre offers inclusive community counselling, providing a range of short-term therapeutic services for people experiencing mild to moderate mental and emotional health challenges:

- **Counselling Services:** Professional support is available for adults, adolescents and couples.
- **Gambling Support:** Tailored counselling for those impacted by gambling addiction, providing guidance in exploring challenges and strategies for coping with everyday life.
- **Community Play Therapy:** A safe space for eligible children to express emotions through play, guided by a trained therapist using toys and creative activities.
- **Art Therapy:** Helps all ages explore emotions through artistic expression, promoting communication and emotional wellbeing.

Community Supports for Children

- **Mindfulness Through Creativity** helps children calm their minds, build compassion, and explore emotions through creative activities.
- **Head & Heart Programme** fosters self-confidence and wellbeing in younger children.
- **Rainbows** offers peer support for children aged 7-12 years experiencing parental separation or bereavement.
- **Superhero Programme** promotes resilience, confidence, and self-esteem in children aged 6-12 years, helping them discover their inner strengths.
- **Parent & Toddler Groups** provide a space for parents/caregivers to connect, socialise, and play with their children. St. Brigid's runs groups in Central Library (Waterford Inner City) and Portlaw (Clodiagh House & Storytelling Group in Portlaw Library).

St. Brigid's Charity Shops

St. Brigid's operates two charity shops in Waterford City. Surplus revenue generated by the shops supports the delivery of counselling and therapeutic services in St. Brigid's. The shops also contribute to the circular economy.

The shops are:

- **Gladstone Street**, offering high-quality, affordable pre-loved clothing and accessories.
- **Westgate Business Park**, specialising in second-hand furniture, homeware, and books.

<p>Family Support Team</p>	<p>The family support team provides a variety of services depending on the needs of the families involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Support: Delivers community-based early intervention and prevention, supporting families through tailored partnerships to achieve their goals. • Parenting Programme: Provides group support for parents of young children, adolescents, and those with additional needs, including Parents Plus and Triple P, plus support for separating and first-time parents. • One-to-One Family Support: Offers individualised assistance, helping families address their unique challenges and build resilience for the future.
<p>Community Groups</p>	<p>Community development is an integral part of the work of St. Brigid's, providing a space for individuals to come together and also access other services as needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair-Based Yoga • Women's Health & Wellbeing Group • Men's Wellbeing Group • Intergenerational Group
<p>Portlaw Community Resource Hub</p>	<p>St. Brigid's delivers an outreach model of family support and community development in Portlaw in the mid-county, which provides a range of services and groups to meet the needs of children, families and individuals from the local community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One to one family support • Parent & Toddler Groups • Community allotments • Children's programmes • Women's group • Information, signposting and advocacy
<p>Community Employment (CE) Scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Community Employment Scheme is an integral part of the work of St. Brigid's. • It 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 St. Brigid's Centre, its charity shops, the Portlaw Community Resource Hub and in other local community organisations.

Some Highlights of St. Brigid's Impact in 2024

The Family Support Team delivered:

- 99 one to one family support
- 2 Parent Plus Programmes
- 2 Rainbows Programmes

Counselling service

- 884 sessions to adults
- 856 sessions to young people
- 77 sessions to couples
- 384 play therapy sessions



Children's Centre

- 172 children attended the services



Charity Shops

- Sales increased by 5%



Case Studies Illustrating St Brigid's Work & Impact

Case Study: Supporting 'Maria'² Through Mindfulness & Creativity

Maria, an 8-year-old girl from Waterford City, was struggling with grief after the loss of both her grandparents. Her parents noticed she had become quiet and withdrawn and was finding it difficult to express her emotions. Seeking help, they reached out to St. Brigid's Family and Community Centre and were advised to consider Play Therapy.

Due to high demand, Maria faced a long wait for therapy and another option, The Rainbow's Bereavement Programme, had also been postponed. Recognising the urgency for support, a Family Support Worker at St. Brigid's, in consultation with their in-house Play Therapist, referred Maria to the *Mindfulness through Creativity programme*.

This six-week programme used creative expression, such as storytelling, art, gentle meditation, and group discussion, to help children explore and understand their emotions. It provided a safe, welcoming space where Maria could engage at her own pace.

Over time, Maria became more open and expressive, sharing her feelings through her artwork and talking comfortably with facilitators and peers. The programme helped her build emotional resilience, regain confidence, and process her grief in a supportive environment.

Her parents spoke highly of the experience, saying:

"The mindfulness course was so beneficial to our daughter. It taught her techniques to calm herself, and she enjoyed it immensely. Thank you so much."

Case Study: Supporting 'James' Through Therapy & Family Support

James, a 10-year-old from County Waterford, experienced emotional challenges following his parents' separation, particularly due to the absence of his father. He became quiet and withdrawn, expressing feelings of sadness to his teacher, which led to a referral to St. Brigid's Family and Community Centre.

His school and mother were concerned about his self-confidence, emotional well-being, and inability to express himself. James was offered 12 sessions of Play Therapy at St. Brigid's. These sessions provided a safe, supportive environment to help him process his feelings, build resilience, and develop healthier coping strategies.

James responded well to the intervention, engaging positively with his therapist and enjoying the sessions. During a final review, his mother reported a marked improvement in both his confidence and emotional regulation. Although additional support was offered, she felt James had already made strong progress and chose not to pursue it at that time.

Recognising her own needs, James' mother also accessed one-to-one parenting support through St. Brigid's. A Family Support Worker helped her navigate both her son's emotional needs and her own experience of separation, and she was also supported in accessing personal counselling.

"St. Brigid's gave James space to heal and build his confidence and gave me an opportunity to speak to a counsellor after a difficult time. The support meant the world to both of us, we no longer felt alone."

Case Study: Parenting Support & Teen Wellbeing

A mother of two teenagers turned to St. Brigid's Family and Community Centre for parenting support, having previously engaged with its services. She was parenting alone following a separation from her children's father, who now lives abroad and not very involved in their lives.

Her older son had become increasingly withdrawn, refusing to attend school and isolating himself socially. The school raised concerns about his frequent absences. The mother, feeling overwhelmed, was also worried about the emotional impact on her younger daughter and the strain on their family dynamic.

Over several weeks, a Family Support Worker at St. Brigid's provided one-to-one support, helping the mother manage stress, access adult counselling, and develop practical steps to address her son's needs. Together, they created a plan that included improving communication with the school, exploring local youth services to encourage his engagement, and supporting his participation in school-based counselling. He began to meet regularly with the school counsellor while his sister began adolescent counselling through St. Brigid's.

Through compassionate, tailored support, the mother gained confidence and tools to strengthen her parenting approach and support her children's emotional wellbeing. The case illustrates the value of early, community-based intervention in helping families navigate complex challenges.

"St. Brigid's helped me and my children to find our footing again when everything felt uncertain. With their support, I was able to take action and be the parent my children needed."

²Names have been changed for anonymity.

Background to Family Resource Centres

Family experiences play a crucial role in individual and societal well-being. Stable family relationships bring significant benefits, while instability can negatively affect both adults and children. The Strategic Framework for Family Support highlights that community-led services are more accessible and effective for families. Family support focuses on:

“Supporting families and individuals in communities to identify their family and local needs; to collectively develop holistic responses and enhance participation in wider community life.”³

Tusla’s Community Services Resource Centre Programme was established to support families, especially the most marginalised, through a network of community-led centres across Ireland. A key aspect of the FRC programme is the involvement of local people in identifying needs and developing needs-led responses.

There is a network of FRCs operating at the heart of communities all over Ireland. They align their work with *Young Ireland, Ireland’s National Policy Framework for Children & Young People (2023)* and work to improve five key national outcomes for children, young people and their families.

OUTCOME AREA	OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS
Health	Healthy physically, mentally and emotionally
Education	Supported in active learning
Safety	Safe from accidental and intentional harm; Secure in the immediate and wider physical environment.
Income	Economically secure
Participation	Part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community; Included and participating in society

Table 1.3: Outcomes to be achieved by Family Support Strategy

The six core guiding principles guiding and informing the work of FRCs around the country are:

- Participation
- Equality
- Awareness raising
- Early intervention
- Strengths-based
- Advocacy

³ FRC National Forum Family Support Position Paper, published within the Family Support Agency Strategic Framework (2013), P 47

The Family Resource Centre National Forum’s mission is to support, empower, and represent FRCs in delivering the FRC National Programme. Its Strategic Plan 2023–2027 underscores FRCs’ role in driving positive change through community development, human rights, and family support. Distinct from individual service models, FRCs emphasise participation and empowerment, engaging communities in shaping responses to local needs.⁴ The National Forum has also published a therapeutic framework to guide FRCs in providing counselling and therapeutic services. This framework promotes prevention and early intervention, while integrating therapeutic supports with services such as early years education, lifelong learning, social prescribing, and youth development, fostering a holistic model of care.⁵

⁴ Family Resource Centre National Forum. (2023). Strategic Plan 2023-2027. Family Resource Centre National Forum: www.familyresource.ie

⁵ Family Resource Centre National Forum, FRC Therapeutic Framework. Available at: familyresourcementalhealth.ie

Review of St. Brigid's to inform new Strategic Plan

As part of development of this Strategic Plan, St. Brigid's undertook a comprehensive review and planning process which was facilitated by independent consultants. As part of this process, staff and members of the community were asked to give their views and feedback on St. Brigid's when completing the anonymous surveys, including recommendations on what the organisation could/should do in the coming years in relation to its services, activities and internal development and to ensure it makes its desired impact.

The staff and board members also took part in a series of workshops which focussed on a) identifying St Brigid's key achievements, activities and impact in recent years; b) identifying strengths, opportunities, challenges and areas for development; c) identifying learning and opportunities to inform the new Plan and d) reviewing the organisation's Vision, Mission, Values to ensure these are accurate and up to date. The discussions and key learning from this process are summarised in this Chapter.



Looking Back: History, Achievements & Challenges

St. Brigid's Family and Community Centre recently celebrated 40 years in operation, and it has achieved a lot in that time, including expanding its services, offerings and number of premises that it operates from. Some of these key achievements and key milestones are summarised in Table 2.1 below.

Key Milestones over 40 years

TIMELINE OF KEY MILESTONES SINCE ST. BRIGID'S OPENED	
1984	Founded by the Sisters of Mercy under Sr. Maria McGuinness to support children, families, and communities in Waterford Inner City.
1994	Introduced the Community Employment Scheme to address long-term unemployment by integrating job opportunities with training.
2000	Established the Family Resource Centre , joining Ireland's national network of 121 Tusla-funded FRCs. Focused on combating disadvantage, supporting families, and engaging local communities in shaping services.
2002	Launched St. Brigid's Counselling Service , staffed by qualified volunteers and funded in part by Tusla National Counselling Services. Provides therapeutic support for adults, adolescents, and couples experiencing emotional and mental health challenges.
2008	Opened St. Brigid's Children Centre in Hennessy's Road, Waterford, a one-stop shop for childcare and parenting support. Offers full-time, part-time, and after-school care, including summer camps, for children aged 1-12.
2015	Developed the Portlaw Community Resource Hub in Waterford Mid-County, expanding outreach services in response to local needs. Provides family support, education programs, community groups, allotments, Portlaw Boules Group & Men's Shed.
2020	Opened a Charity Shop on Gladstone Street in Waterford City. Together with the existing Westgate shop, it sells second-hand clothing, books, and furniture, with all surplus funds reinvested into local community services.
2020	Responded swiftly to the Covid-19 lockdowns and requirements to maintain its services to the community. Provided: online parent programmes, telephone counselling, click and collect, outdoor curriculum, online training; and delivered food hampers, play packs and wellbeing packs in the community.
2021	Rolled out the Problem Gambling Support & Counselling Service , a national initiative led by the Gambling Awareness Trust and National Forum of FRCs. Offers confidential, specialised therapy for individuals, families, and groups affected by gambling issues.
2022	Secured funding from Local Area Tusla to launch a part-time Community Play Therapy service for children aged 3-12, helping them express emotions and process experiences in a safe therapeutic setting.

Table 2.1: Key Milestones & Achievements in St. Brigid's Family and Community Resource Centre's History

Key Achievements in Recent Years

The following is a brief overview of St. Brigid's key achievements in recent years as identified by staff, volunteers and board members as part of the internal review process. They include both service/activity related achievements and internal, organisational development related achievements:

Service/Activities Related Achievements

Mental Health

- Provided counselling, addiction support, mindfulness, play therapy and wellbeing supports

Childcare & Education

- Built inclusive crèche with sensory room
- Strengthened supports for autistic and neurodivergent people

Community Engagement

- Ran information services, social groups, and post-Covid rebuilding
- Developed the Portlaw Community Resource Hub and created safe social spaces

Individual & Family Supports

- Expanded services and increased accessibility
- Encouraged intergenerational and newcomer inclusion and integration
- Provided holistic supports for families including therapies and wellbeing groups

Achievements related to internal/operations

Teamwork and Culture

- Staff and volunteers are kind, reliable, committed, and culturally sensitive
- Supportive work environment with strong team spirit

Community Collaboration

- Skilled team with shared purpose; regular meetings promote cooperation
- Strong links with local initiatives

Accessibility and Affordability

- Affordable counselling and inclusive services
- Shops offer quality goods at low cost

Governance and Sustainability

- Governance code compliance and stable management
- Ongoing investment in growth, training, and infrastructure

Adaptability and Resilience

- Responsive to change and challenges like Covid-19 and funding pressures
- Evolving with community and staff needs

"(There is a) unity of purpose among staff and volunteers"

Management Team

Building on Achievements

The team discussed how they and the organisation could build on and learn from these achievements. Suggestions and emerging themes focused on:

- Service maintenance and growth
- Collaboration and community engagement
- Flexibility and accessibility
- Team well-being and culture

Challenges in Recent Years

The team also identified and discussed challenges in recent years and potential future challenges also. Emerging themes included:

Funding & Sustainability

- Limited funding impacts services, staff pay, and long-term viability

Staffing

- Recruitment, retention, and workload affect wellbeing
- Retirement of experienced staff poses continuity challenges

Service Delivery

- Complex needs and rising demand stretch capacity
- Adapting services for diverse communities remains difficult

Communication

- Language barriers and low community awareness of services in some areas

Operations

- Training, governance, and admin strained by resources
- CE participant needs require clearer understanding

Mitigating challenges

The team also discussed how they and the organisation could potentially overcome some of these challenges in the coming years. These included:

- Strengthen partnerships, systems and referral processes
- Expand staffing, as well as staff training and support
- Strengthen childcare services
- Enhance volunteer efforts and CE engagement
- Foster teamwork and social connection

“People wait to be in crisis before they come up (to St. Brigid’s)”
Staff Member

“Our teams are a bit disjointed geographically and some don’t know each other... More staff days, social occasions & regular team meetings would be helpful.”
Staff Member

Current Reality: Strengths & Areas for Development

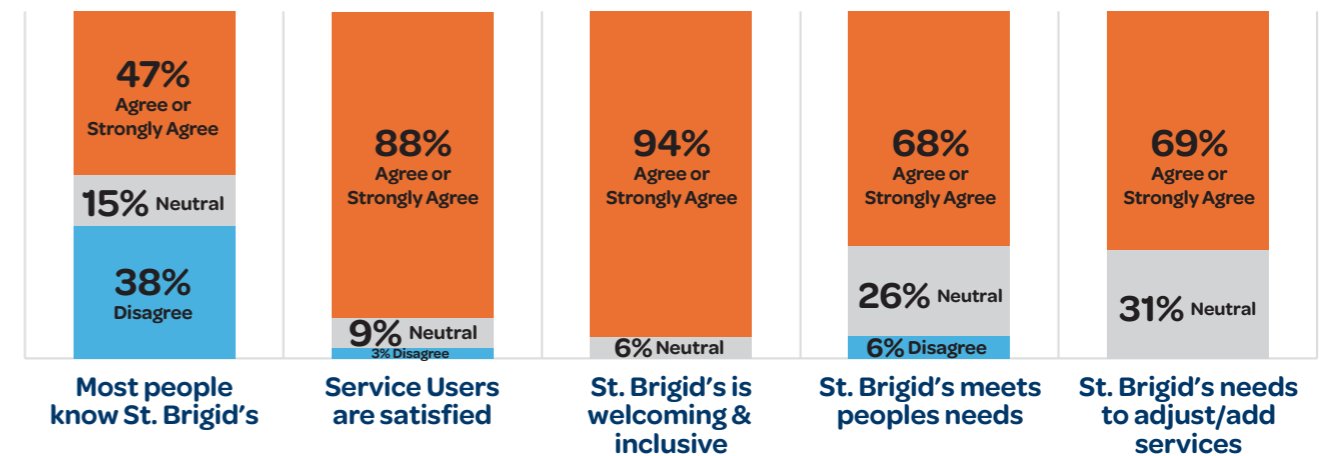
Staff and volunteers gave their views on St. Brigid’s strengths and areas for improvement as part of this process. These views were gathered through discussions at strategic planning workshops as well as through the anonymous staff/volunteer survey.

Graph 2.1 below illustrates staff and volunteers’ views on St. Brigid’s and its current services. It is very positive to note that nearly 90% of the 41 staff/volunteers believe that services users are satisfied with the supports provided by St. Brigid’s, 94% believe that St. Brigid’s is inclusive and welcoming.

Slightly fewer respondents (68%) agreed/strongly agreed that its programmes meet the needs of individuals, families, and groups in Waterford and surrounding areas, and 69% believed it needs to adjust or add to its services to meet these needs. This was part of the ensuing discussions in the strategic planning process.

Finally, nearly 40% of staff and volunteers who completed the survey did not agree that most people know about St. Brigid’s. These results were discussed as part of the strategic planning process and resulted in some new services and activities around outreach and communication among other things.

Staff & Volunteer Feedback on St. Brigid’s



Graph 2.1. Feedback from staff, volunteers and Board members on St. Brigid’s FCC

St Brigid's Strengths

At a strategic planning workshop, staff and volunteers highlighted and discussed many of St Brigid's strengths, including loyalty, teamwork, dedication, collaboration, engagement, respect, reliability, and support and more (see word cloud and Table 2.5 below). The discussions and high participation during the workshops reflected a strong team spirit and culture of collaboration, which should be nurtured, especially given growing service demands.



Further discussions on St. Brigid's strengths are summarised thematically below:

Community engagement and reputation:

- St Brigid's is well-respected for its inclusive support, actively contributing to local initiatives and volunteer efforts.
- Its accessible services ensure lower-income families receive the help they need.

The people:

- The team provide compassionate, reliable, and welcoming support, delivering high-quality services with integrity.
- Strong teamwork, an inclusive approach, and adaptability ensure responsiveness to evolving community needs.

The way the team works:

- The organisation fosters a supportive environment with shared goals, strengthened by transparent communication and strong leadership.
- Its inclusive, non-judgmental, and innovative approach supports meaningful engagement and effective service delivery

Governance and ethical standards:

- The organisation maintains professional, compliant, and accountable leadership, ensuring ethical and effective operations.
- Its cost-effective services are built on strong community trust, delivering reliable support to those in need.

Community supports provided:

- St Brigid's remains responsive and adaptable, providing diverse, high-quality services that support families and evolving community needs.
- Its accessible pathways, inclusive spaces, and advocacy efforts ensure security, respect, and meaningful support for neurodiverse and multicultural communities

"We are very lucky with the staff we have – committed decent people."
Management Team

Areas for Development/Threats/Risks

When asked about any threats, risks or areas for development, the staff and board identified similar issues as when they identified challenges. These included in particular: funding and staffing constraints, high levels of demand for services and the impact of this on staff and service users, as well as lower levels of knowledge about St. Brigid's among some areas/groups in the community compared to others. These can be summarised as follows:

Funding and resources:

- Uncertainty around government funding and rising rents pose financial challenges, making it difficult to secure suitable premises and attract volunteers.

Staffing and team development:

- Retirement of experienced staff highlights the need for recruitment, team-building, and professional development.
- Expanding networking opportunities would strengthen support.

Service availability and impact:

- Sixty nine percent of the 41 staff and volunteers who responded to the survey believe the organisation needs to adjust its services to better serve the community.
- Increased 1:1 support for parents and siblings of neurodiverse children, along with expanded creative therapies and supports for new communities would enhance accessibility.

Community engagement and competition:

- Limited community engagement and competition with other organisations create visibility challenges.
- A significant portion of the respondents to the internal survey (38%) did not agree that most people in the target area know about St. Brigid's and its programmes (41% agreed), highlighting a need for increased outreach.

"Focus on community empowerment."
Staff/Volunteer

2.3 Looking Forward:

Learning and Opportunities to Inform new Plan

After an extensive review process considering past achievements and challenges, as well as the current reality, the team members identified the following learning, opportunities and potential actions to inform the new strategic plan.

Marketing and communications:

- A marketing and communications plan is important to improve knowledge and awareness in the community about all the different services that St. Brigid’s offers and to improve visibility among potential funders.
- Ensure clarity internally and externally on what the organisation provides and doesn’t provide and what its limits are, and what should be referred onwards.
- More locally based advertising, social media presence and family fun/ community days.

Collaboration and networking:

- More liaison, collaboration and networking with local organisations, agencies and potential funders – ask the community for help while we are helping them.

Recruitment:

- Recruit more volunteers to help deliver programmes – link in with Waterford Volunteer Centre.
- Seek additional funding to increase staff numbers to meet demands

Meeting increasing needs in community:

- Continue crucial services and expand where possible.
- Develop more group programmes to help meet increasing demands.

Diversity and inclusion:

- Updated Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policies
- More services and supports for new communities, along with staff training
- Greater diversity amongst staff and volunteers
- Information in different languages

Fundraising and staff development:

- Regular support, supervision, team building, professional development and improved conditions.

Review and evaluation:

- Regular planning, review and evaluation processes are useful and important – annually and in relation t to programmes.

Note:

Feedback from community members about St. Brigid’s and feedback and suggestions from staff and volunteers on activities and programmes to meet needs are summarised in Chapter 4 which provides findings from the consultation process.

“More outreach.”
Staff/Volunteer

“More groups to optimise economies of scale with limited finances.”
Staff/Volunteer

Socio Demographic Profile of Waterford

Overview

This is the socio-economic profile for Waterford City and Suburbs and Portlaw, and was created using data from the Census 2022, and the Pobal HP Deprivation Index. The goal of this profile is to demonstrate for St. Brigid’s FCC, the communities, regions, and individuals most in need of services over the next five years so that they may strategically focus their resources. This section will give an overview of Waterford City and Suburbs and Portlaw (Map 1) in terms of the areas’ challenges and the individuals facing them.

Geography

St. Brigid’s Family and Community Centre has two locations in Waterford City and a Resource Hub in Portlaw, in the mid-County. They also run two charity shops in the Waterford Area. Waterford City is Ireland’s fifth most populous city and is in a historic and strategic position bordering County Kilkenny, along the River Suir. The Tier 2 port of Belview is located on this river, linking Waterford to the wider world. Waterford is connected by train and bus routes, with Plunkett Station and multiple bus stops along the quays. Waterford is also the hub into which the M9, N24, N25, and N29 meet.

Waterford is on the cusp of new development along its North Quays which will include a new rail transport hub and sustainable transport bridge connecting the North Quay to the City Centre and Waterford Greenway.



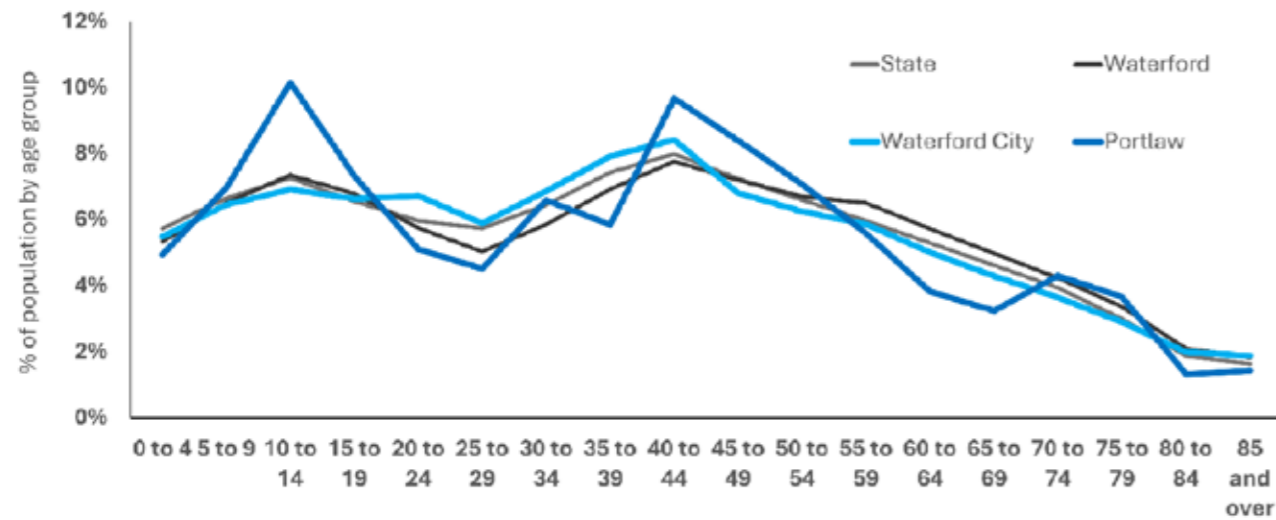
Map 1 Waterford and location of St. Brigid’s services

Portlaw is a town in in the scenic North-East of County Waterford, near the borders of County Kilkenny and South County Tipperary. It is located 14km north-west of the city, off R680. It is a 19th century industrial town that was located where the River Clodiagh meets the River Suir. There is a bus-route connecting Portlaw to Waterford City.

Population

As of April 2022, Waterford City had 60,079 residents, an 8% increase since 2016, while Portlaw had 1,881 residents, up 12%. Waterford’s population was almost evenly split by gender (49% male, 51% female), similar to Portlaw (49% male, 51% female).

Young people (18 and under) made up 24% in Waterford and 28% in Portlaw, with slightly fewer older people (65+) than the national average. Waterford had more young adults (19–35) at 20.8% than the national average of 19%, while Portlaw had fewer (18%) (Graph 3.1).

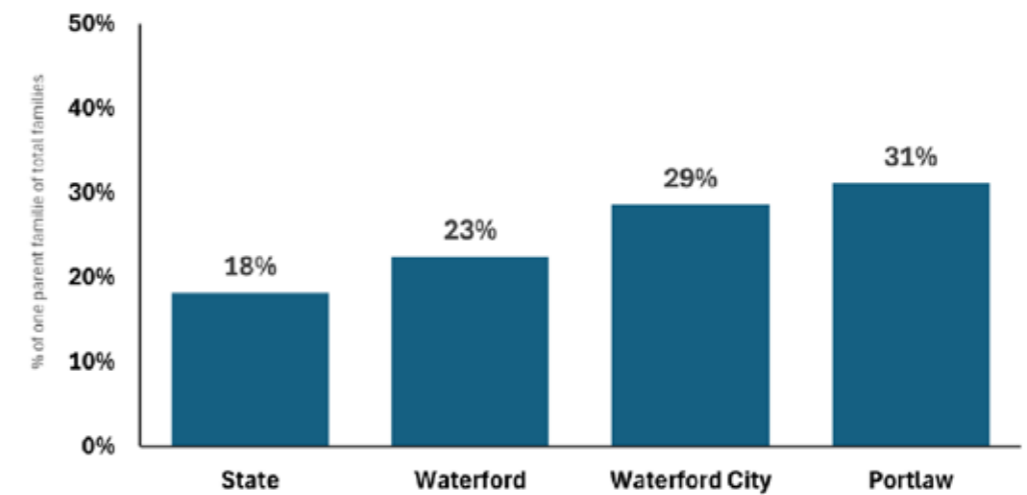


Graph 3.1 Age Profile

In citizenship, 84% of residents were Irish, with lower rates in Waterford (79%) and higher in Portlaw (91%). Waterford had more diversity in ethnicity, with 69% identifying as White Irish compared to 89% in Portlaw. Overall, Waterford City and Suburbs had a higher proportion of young adults and greater ethnic diversity, mirroring trends in Ireland’s other major cities.

Households

Waterford City and Portlaw have higher rates of one parent families with a child under 15 than the national average (18%), at 29% and 31%, respectively (Graph 3.2).

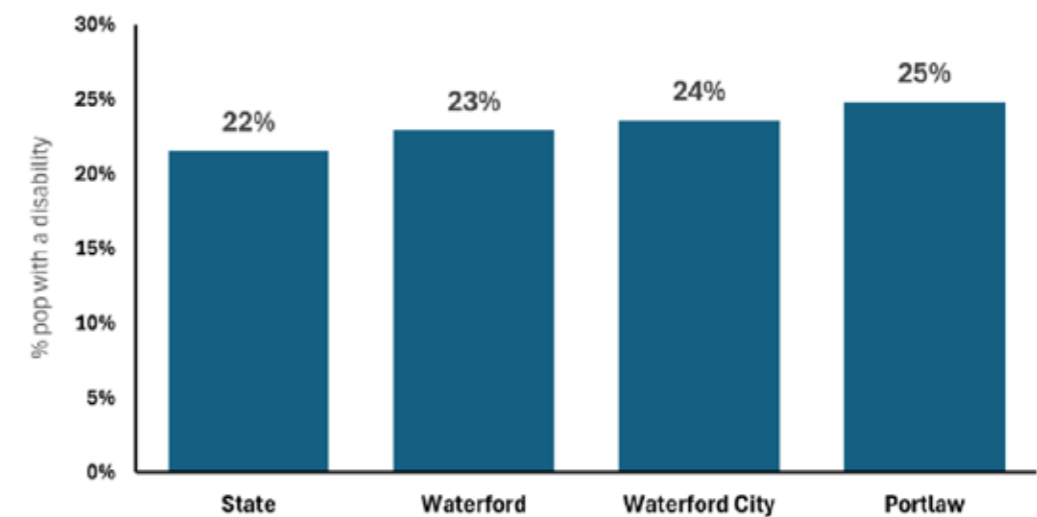


Graph 3.2 One parent families

Waterford has fewer families in the child-rearing stage (44%) than the state average, while Portlaw is higher (46%). Portlaw has fewer pre-family households (6%) compared to Waterford 10%) and the national figure (10%), indicating fewer new families. Empty-nest households are close to the national rate in Waterford (10%) but lower in Portlaw (7%). A significant proportion of adult children live with their parents, particularly in Portlaw (31%) compared to the State (27%) and Waterford City (25%), highlighting the possible lack of available housing.

Disability and Health

The Central Statistics Office defines disability in relation to a person as experiencing a ‘long lasting condition or difficulty to any extent.’ In both Portlaw and Waterford City and Suburbs, just under one quarter of the population (25% and 24% respectively) identified themselves as having a disability, which is higher than the national figure of 22% and the Waterford County figure of 23% (Graph 3.3).



Graph 3.3 Population with a disability

The proportion of people in Waterford City and Suburbs and Portlaw who described their health as bad or very bad was 2% in both areas, which is slightly higher than the state. 78% of people in Waterford City and Suburbs, described their health as either good or very good. This is lower than the national average of 83%. On the other hand, it is higher in Portlaw with 86% of people reporting good or very good health on census night 2022.

Education

In Waterford City and Suburbs, 10% of those over 15 had no formal or only primary education, while in Portlaw, this was higher at 13% (above the national average of 10%). Portlaw also has more residents whose highest education is secondary school—25% completed lower secondary (vs. 15% in Waterford and 13% nationally), and 21% finished upper secondary (vs. 19% in Waterford and 18% nationally).

27% of those aged over 15 in Waterford City and Suburbs reported having achieved an ordinary bachelor’s degree or higher third level education qualification, which is lower than the national average 34%. This is significantly lower in Portlaw, at 20%.

Economic Status

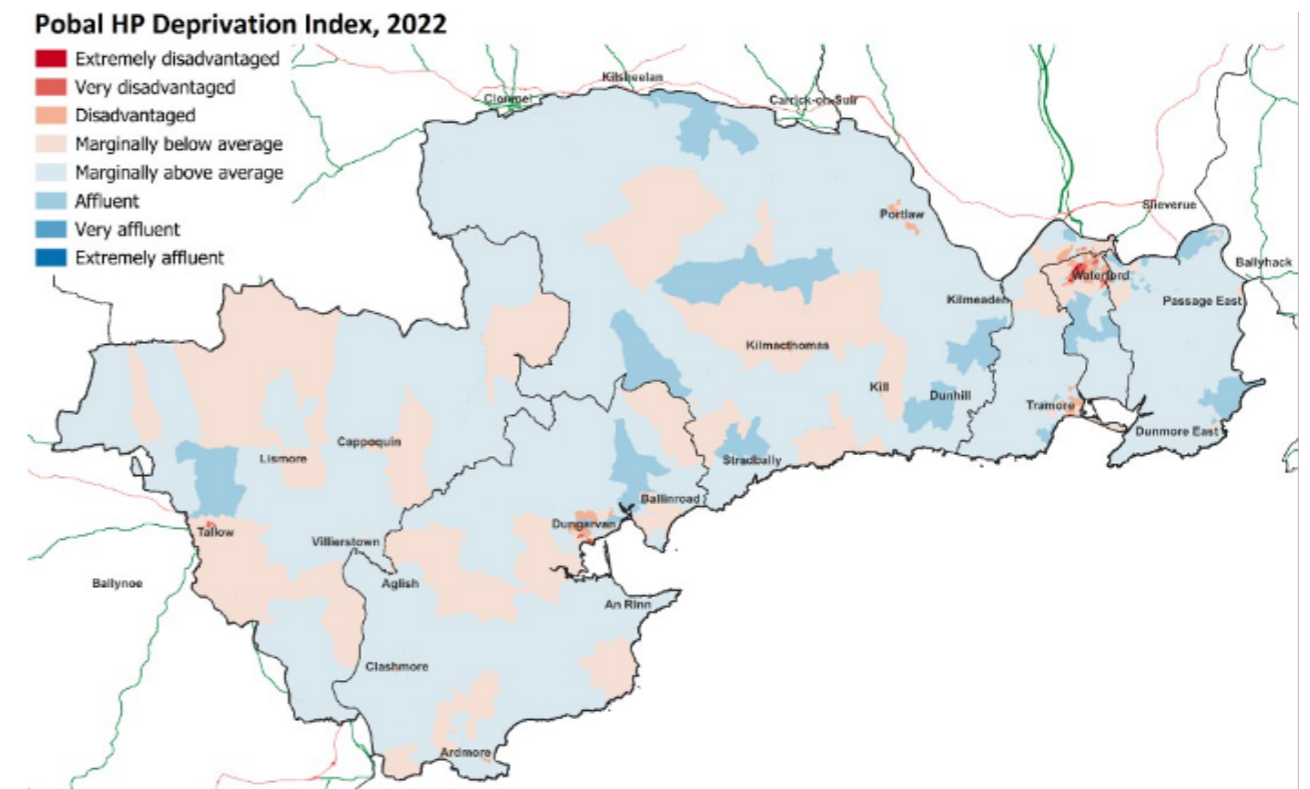
Economic status looks at employment levels to characterise the economically active population. In Waterford City and Suburbs, 88 % of the labour force described themselves as ‘at work,’ and 12% described themselves as unemployed – including those looking for their first regular job. In Portlaw, 91% of the labour force described themselves as ‘at work’ and 9% were unemployed. In Waterford City and Suburbs, 11% of the population over 15 cited ‘student’ as their principle economic status, like the national figure of 11%. This figure was 10% in Portlaw. In Waterford City and Suburbs, 27% of the population noted that they worked semi-skilled or unskilled jobs. This figure is higher than Portlaw (24%) and the national average (24%).

Housing

In Portlaw 66% of households own their home either outright or with a mortgage. In Waterford City and Suburbs this figure is 52%, which is lower than the State figure of 66%. In Portlaw 18% of households rent from the local authority, and 16% do so in Waterford City and Suburbs. These figures are a lot higher than the national statistic of 8%. Renting from a private landlord, however, is the most common type of occupancy in Waterford City and Suburbs, after home ownership, at 22%.

Pobal HP Deprivation Index

The 2022 Pobal HP Deprivation Index has created a single indicator for measuring disadvantage and affluence in Ireland, to better understand the social conditions across the country. The deprivation scores are created using a range of data from recent census figures, analysing the relationship between population, age, principal economic status, education and home make up. It does not include individual incomes, health, or distance to services, which all contribute to a household’s individual level of deprivation. What the deprivation scores do show is the areas that are deemed to be more disadvantaged or affluent in relation to other areas.



Map 3.2 Pobal HP Deprivation Index 2022

Most of Waterford City and Suburbs are shown to be marginally below average and disadvantaged, with pockets of very and extremely disadvantaged areas around Larchville and Ballytruckle. There are also some pockets of Affluence at Kilbarry, Gracedieu, Farranshoneen and Grange Upper. These affluent areas are predominantly in the South and East of the city, with the greater areas of disadvantage being in the centre and west of the city. Unlike the city, Portlaw has no pockets of affluence, with most of the town classed as disadvantaged and marginally below average in the town centre. Portlaw’s rural surrounds are scored as marginally above average.



Findings of Consultation Process

This chapter outlines the findings of a comprehensive needs analysis conducted as part of the development of this Strategic Plan. Section 4.1 below outlines the consultation process and who was involved. Sections 4.2 to 4.4 summarise the challenges and needs in Waterford according to those who took part in the consultations, along with their feedback and suggestions/recommendations on what is needed to meet these needs. Section 4.5 summarises the responses of community members to questions that invited their views and feedback on St. Brigid’s FCC.

Overview of Consultation Process

To ensure an evidence-based and fully informed approach to the strategic planning process, St. Brigid’s commissioned independent researchers to undertake a comprehensive consultation process with a variety of key stakeholders during autumn/winter 2024. In total 243 stakeholders took part in the consultation process including service users and other members of the community from both Waterford City and Portlaw, as well as staff and volunteers from across the various projects and programmes carried out by St. Brigid’s FCC and members of the board of trustees.



Figure 4.1. Consultation process and breakdown of participants

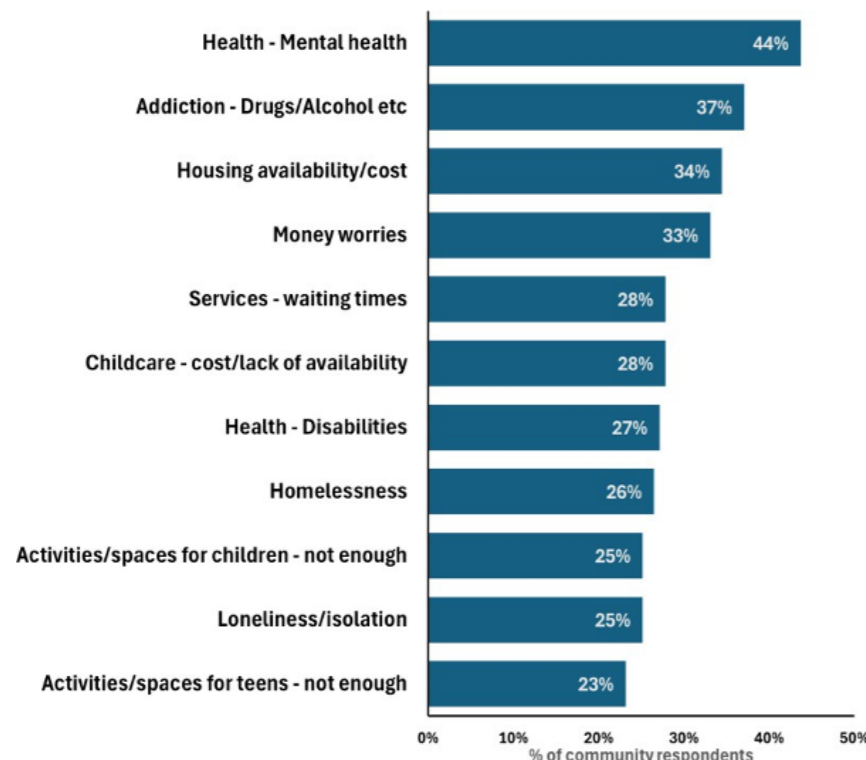
The consultations for St. Brigid’s Plan (2025–2030) were undertaken through the following methods:

- An anonymous survey for service users and community members (completed by 151 people)
- An anonymous survey for staff, volunteers and board members (completed by 41 people)
- 10 separate focus groups with over 50 participants from the community in total.

Participants in the consultations came from Waterford City (46%), Portlaw area (25%), Waterford County (16%), and outside Waterford (13%). Over half of the people who completed the staff/volunteer survey were paid staff (51%), 22% were volunteers, and the remaining were involved in employment schemes or on management committees. The focus groups’ participants were a diverse mix of community members including members of women’s groups, men’s groups, residents’ associations, gardening and retirement groups, substance misuse workers, and parents. See Figure 4.1 above for more information on the methods and participants in the consultation process.

Overview of Consultation Process

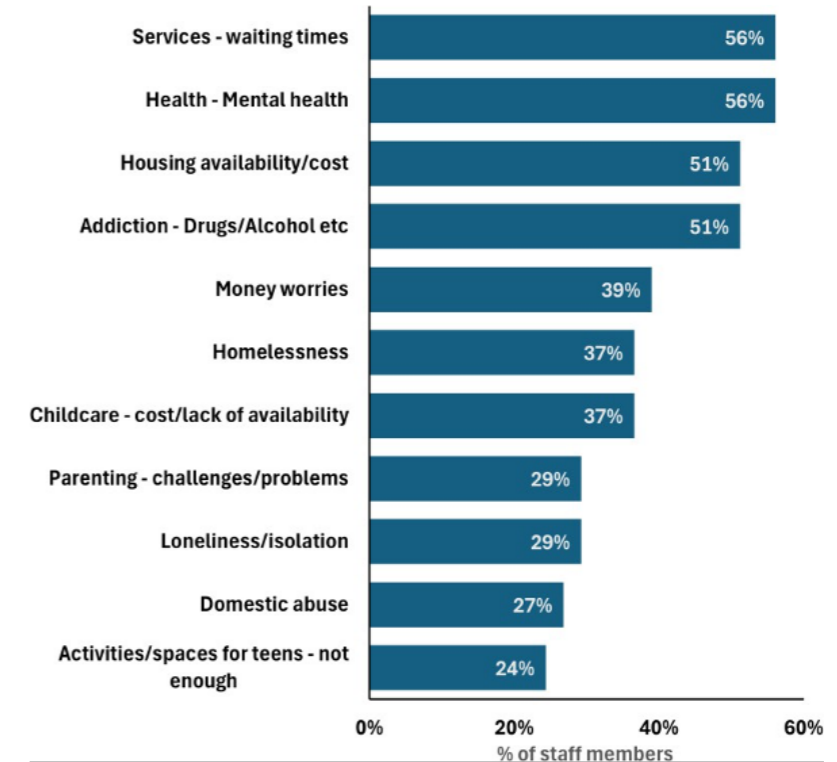
When asked to identify key challenges in the community at present, the 151 service users and other individuals who completed a survey highlighted several social and economic challenges in Waterford and Portlaw. Mental health was the top concern (highlighted by 44% of community respondents), followed by addiction (37%), housing costs and availability (34%), and financial worries (33%). Other issues included long waiting times for services (28%), childcare costs and availability (28%), disabilities (27%), and homelessness (26%). Additional concerns included a lack of activities and spaces for children (25%) and teens (23%), as well as loneliness and isolation (25%) (see Graph 4.1).



Graph 4.1 Top Challenges as chosen by community survey respondents

During focus groups, community members highlighted two key challenges: increasing engagement, especially among young people, and securing more community spaces for social activities. Others shared experiences of loneliness, while mental health and addiction were identified as widespread concerns within the broader community.

Staff and volunteers, drawing from their first-hand experience, also identified key challenges affecting the community. The most pressing concerns raised by over half of staff/volunteers were long waiting times for services and mental health. Housing availability and cost, and addiction (drugs and alcohol) were highlighted as top challenges in the community by over half (51%) of staff/volunteers while financial worries, homelessness and childcare (both cost and availability) were each highlighted by nearly 40% of respondents. Additionally, 29% of staff/volunteers noted parenting challenges and loneliness or isolation as significant issues (Graph 4.2).

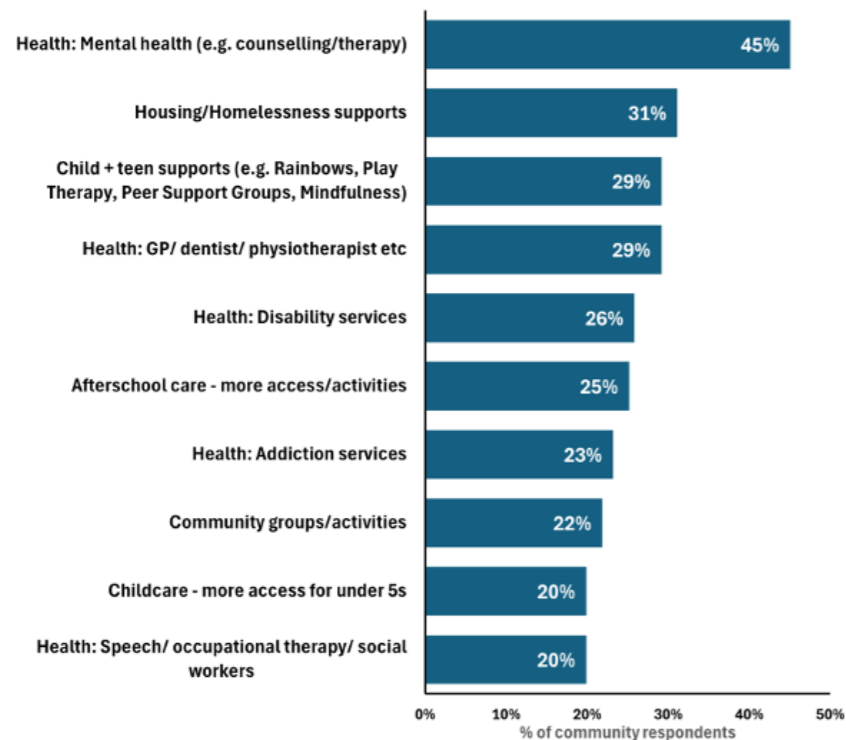


Graph 4.2 Top Challenges as chosen by staff and volunteers

Overview of Support Needs in the Community

Community members were asked about the types of supports and services they felt were most needed to improve well-being and quality of life in their area and these included:

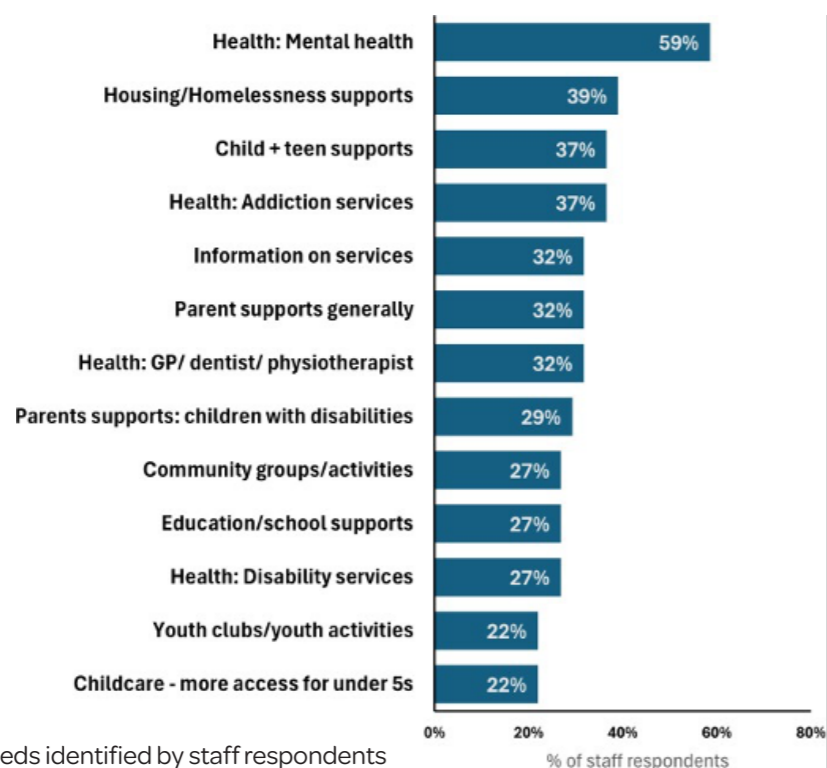
- Mental health support was the most requested (45%), followed by housing and homelessness services (31%).
- Support for children and young people, as well as access to health professionals, were each identified by 29% of respondents.
- Addiction support was noted by 23%, while 22% emphasised the need for more community groups and activities.
- Additionally, 20% highlighted the importance of childcare for children under five, as well as access to therapies and social work services (Graph 4.3).



Graph 4.3 Top support needs chosen by members of the community/service users

Community focus groups identified a need for stronger parental support—especially for families of neurodivergent children, those with disabilities, or mental health challenges. They also called for expanded mental health services, more community events, and improved signposting and awareness of supports available through St. Brigid’s FCC.

Staff and volunteers highlighted urgent community needs based on their frontline experience. Mental health support was the top priority (59%), followed by housing and homelessness services (39%), and child and teen supports (37%), especially around mental health and peer engagement. Addiction services (37%) and improved access to healthcare professionals (32%) were also gaps. Other priorities included parent supports, services for children with disabilities (29%), expanded education, disability, and community group supports (27%). (Graph 4.4 below).



Graph 4.4 Support needs identified by staff respondents

The support needs identified by both staff and community members highlight a strong demand for essential services, particularly in mental health, housing, and family support. Mental health services emerged as the most pressing concern across both groups, underscoring the widespread need for counselling, therapy and psychological assistance.

Challenges, Support Needs & Recommendations by Theme

This section provides an overview of the findings of the consultations under 5 key themes based on insights from consultations with service users, community members and staff, volunteers, consultations, highlighting key challenges, identified support needs, and recommendations for improvement.

These are:

- Health and Well-being
- Learning
- Economic Security
- Safety
- Connections

Health and Wellbeing		
Challenges in the community	Support Needs in community	Recommendations for St. Brigid’s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor mental health • Health services not always accessible • Long waiting lists for healthcare and mental health support • Lack of disability services • Substance misuse • Not enough activities or spaces for children or teenagers • Not being eligible for statutory services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health support through counselling • Child and teen support through play therapy and age-appropriate counselling • Child therapies accessible in school and outside of school hours • Access to health services in general • Accessible and available disability services • Substance misuse services • General health therapies (physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy) 	<p>Children and young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental support in developmental concerns and assessments for their children • Expanded counselling and play therapy services • Greater engagement with fathers • Emotional support for children transitioning through education <p>Health and Wellbeing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obesity reversal • Supports for neurodivergence including groups and 1:1 • Substance misuse treatment <p>Youth Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A regular weekly group for teens • Peer support groups for teens

“People can feel isolated in rural areas.”
Community Member

“Substance misuse is prevalent.”
Staff Member

“As a father I felt on my own and that there was no support.”
Community Member

Learning		
Challenges in the community	Support Needs in community	Recommendations for St. Brigid's
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning needs Parenting challenges Not enough parenting support Children and young people being unhappy in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education supports Parental support for parents of children with disabilities, one parent families and new parents Traveller supports LGBTQI+ supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration and cultural programmes More parental and family supports Educational supports including English lessons for non-Irish nationals More staff training including diversity and inclusion

"English language classes and conversation classes for new communities."
Staff Member/Volunteer

"It can be hard to get the time to fill up my cup with what I want to do."
Community Member

Economic Security		
Challenges in the community	Support Needs in community	Recommendations for St. Brigid's
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing availability Money worries Lack of and cost of childcare Homelessness Difficulties getting a job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing supports Afterschool care More childcare for children aged under five years Financial information and supports Employment supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More housing supports More programmes for the community Childcare made available for parents participating in parenting programmes

"Parents can't always access childcare, and grandparents have to step in."
Community Member

"I spend all my money on medical expenses."
Community Member

Safety		
Challenges in the community	Support Needs in community	Recommendations for St. Brigid's
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) Child protection Peer pressure and bullying Racism Violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bullying supports DSGBV services Child protection Racism supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More access to accurate information on supports and services available

"We need more support from social workers."
Community Member

Social Participation and Inclusion		
Challenges in the community	Support Needs in community	Recommendations for St. Brigid's
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough activities or spaces for children and young people Loneliness Not enough activities for families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More community groups and activities More youth clubs and activities More youth spaces and playgrounds Baby and toddler groups More community events More access to community space for class and groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More child/teen social groups Additional support groups Plain language info Inter-cultural programmes Community outreach Info sessions for staff Updated Waterford services list

"More cross generational and intercultural activities."
Community Member

"Activities keep you active - your brain working and not being lonely."
Community Member

“Be more visual on what is available. Great resources in place but not many know about them.”
Community Member

“Come out and find people. We need help.”
Community Member

“A stronger presence on social media would be so beneficial to your organisation.”
Community Member

St Brigid’s Strategic Goals & Activities 2025 - 2029

To ensure an evidence-based approach to the strategic goals, objectives and activities that St. Brigid’s undertakes over the next 5 years, St. Brigid’s commissioned independent researchers and facilitators to undertake a local needs and gaps analysis including a comprehensive consultation process.

With the support of the facilitators, staff and board members then identified and agreed strategic priorities, goals, targets and activities that it will carry out to meet identified areas of need that fall within its remit. These priorities align with each of the National Outcome Areas for children and young people, with the addition of two extra themes that were also identified as priority areas. These are: ‘inclusion, accessibility and outreach’ and ‘organisational development, resources and capacity building’.

The following sections outline St. Brigid’s strategic goals, objectives, targets and activities for the next 5 years.

5.1 St Brigid’s Strategic Goals 2025 - 2029

St. Brigid’s Strategic Goals	
Health & Wellbeing	People of all ages have access to preventative mental health and wellbeing supports in our catchment area.
Learning	Staff and service users are supported and empowered through regular workshops and training/upskilling opportunities.
Economic Security	Adults can access a range of services and supports in St. Brigid’s that support their economic security.
Safe & Protected from Harm	Staff are more empowered to support service users with areas of emerging need or concern.
Social Participation & Connection	Facilitate and promote social participation, connection and integration in the local community.
Inclusion, Accessibility & Outreach	Our services and supports are accessible, inclusive and well-known within our catchment areas.
Organisational Development, Resources & Capacity Building	We will aim to meet current and future demand for our services, in terms of resources, staff development, infrastructure and governance.

5.2 St. Brigid's Strategic Goals, Objectives & Activities 2025 - 2029

National Outcome Area: Health & Wellbeing	
Strategic Goal: People of all ages have access to preventative mental health and wellbeing supports in our catchment area	
Objective 1: Provide services to children, families and individuals that support their positive mental health and emotional wellbeing	
Vision of Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of a full-time community play therapy service. Increased delivery of problem gambling support Recruitment of sufficient qualified volunteer counsellors to manage demand for adult counselling Reduced waiting times Digitalisation of the counselling service 	Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a range of needs-led counselling services for adolescents and adults Provide community play therapy for children up to 12 years Deliver a range of group programmes to children and young people Engage with funders to obtain sufficient resources to expand the service to meet the emerging need in the community. Collaborate and partner with other organisations to deliver services Training and awareness raising around Infant Mental Health Ongoing promotion of the services and programmes provided
Objective 2: Provide supports to parents, grandparents and carers in relation to their parenting roles and the wellbeing of their children	
Vision of Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most families referred to the service through self-referral, internal referral and/or external referral can access programmes and one-to-one support 	Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver evidenced-based parenting programmes and workshops Delivery of Rainbows including the recruitment and training of volunteer facilitators Continue Parent and Toddler Groups in Waterford and Portlaoigh Create information leaflets for programmes to disseminate among appropriate organisations Ongoing outreach to recruit group participants including the most vulnerable families
Objective 3: People of all ages can participate in a range of activities and groups which enhance their holistic wellbeing and their engagement in the community	
Vision of Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who are seeking social interaction, informal learning/upskilling, and engagement in activities can access support and signposting Decreased social isolation and loneliness Address rural isolation 	Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run a range of groups to promote health and wellbeing and alleviate social isolation incl. Friday Morning Coffee Group for older women, the Women's Health Group Programme to meet the holistic health needs of women, and Men's Wellness Group Offer chair-based Yoga to enhance health and wellbeing Raise awareness among the Traveller community of the services available in St. Brigid's Signpost and raise awareness of the services available in the community for the LGBTQI+ community Deliver an Intergenerational Programme Host Intercultural events to foster cultural enrichment Continue to deliver an outreach service in Portlaoigh providing support, programmes and activities to meet the community need

National Outcome Area: Education & Learning	
Strategic Goal: Staff and service users are supported and empowered through regular workshops and training/upskilling opportunities	
Objective 1: Ongoing essential staff training to be included as a budgeted item for each section and included in the annual operation plan	
Vision of Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff and volunteers have the necessary skills and training to carry out their work. St. Brigid's is compliant with all relevant legislation and regulation 	Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct regular training needs analysis Identify and provide essential training for staff which is accessible i.e. in person / online Implement and monitor a staff training log
Objective 2: St. Brigid's values training and development opportunities for staff which are intended either to lead to enhanced job performance or significantly contribute to relevant personal/professional development	
Vision of Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A highly qualified and motivated staff team with the necessary skillset to deliver a wide range of services, programmes and activities A staff team that feels respected and supported in relation to personal development leading to enhanced professional practice and increased morale 	Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board considers proposals from staff who wish to engage in paid training and education which relates to the work of the service Facilitate formal meetings regarding training and upskilling Training is an agenda item for supervision meetings Facilitate opportunities for staff to meet socially to support personal development, morale and wellbeing.
Objective 3: Adults can access learning opportunities which support them within their parenting roles, and which are needs-led, and delivered in a way that meets their needs	
Vision of Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> St. Brigid's offers a wide-ranging suite of evidence-based parenting programmes and workshops delivered to meet the needs of parents St. Brigid's collaborates with other agencies including other FRCs ensuring programme delivery is needs-led and effective Clear referral pathways are in place 	Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver a range of group parenting programmes and workshops, including child development workshops, for parents of children and adolescents, including children with additional needs, and separating and separated parents Provide a drop-in clinic for parents Continue to engage with the Waterford Parent Hub regarding programme delivery, information sharing and enhancing access for parents and caregivers to services throughout Waterford Enhanced internal communication leading to more effective responses to presenting need

**Objective 4:
Continued provision of a community childcare centre which provides affordable, accessible and inclusive childcare and out of school care in a child-centred environment under the care of dedicated and professional staff**

Vision of Success

- Children attending St. Brigid's Children Centre have access to a high-quality child-centred and nurturing environment indoors and outdoors
- Families have access to a high quality, professional service which offers a range of inclusive and affordable Early Years and out of school services
- The Children Centre is staffed by an experienced, qualified, and motivated team who feel valued and acknowledged for their work with children and families

Activities

- Ongoing promotion of the Children Centre as an integral part of St. Brigid's Family and Community Centre
- Continue to deliver a child centred, inclusive and nurturing curriculum both indoors and outdoors which reflects the themes and standards of both Aistear and Siolta
- Ongoing staff development and training
- Access capital funding to ensure the service is sustainable
- Access adequate core funding for staffing including cover staff
- Engage with DSP in relation to the emerging challenges of recruiting suitable CE participants
- Engage with key stakeholders at local and national level to advocate for acceptable terms and conditions and pay rates for childcare staff in acknowledgement of their professional roles and of the significant workload associated with the high level of compliance and regulation which governs the sector
- Repair/replace the outdoor play space to ensure it meets SIOLTA Standards and TUSLA regulations in relation to health and safety

National Outcome Area: Economic Security

Strategic Goal:

Adults can access a range of services and supports in St. Brigid's that support their economic security

Objective 1:

Families and individuals have the opportunity for personal development and increased access to education, volunteering, employment, and financial security

Vision of Success

- Families and individuals are empowered to avail of supports they need to improve their lives and achieve their potential
- Funding is secured to deliver formal and informal training to adults in Waterford and Portlaoise
- CE Participants are encouraged and supported to engage in both formal and informal training opportunities

Activities

- Deliver formal and informal training opportunities for individuals in Waterford and Portlaoise
- Operate the Individual Learner Plan (ILP) for all CE participants in accordance with the objectives of the CE Scheme, including personal and professional development of participants
- Continue to engage with WWETB and other relevant agencies to access funding to deliver a range of training and community education to adults in Waterford and Portlaoise
- Establish partnerships with other relevant organisations to provide physical spaces for training and programmes to take place

Objective 2:

Families and individuals who are experiencing poverty and inadequate financial resources can avail of practical supports for themselves and their children

Vision of Success

- Families and individuals are empowered to avail of the supports they need to improve their lives and achieve their potential
- Revenue generated by charity shops supports the delivery of low-cost counselling and therapeutic supports
- Families can access affordable and high-quality childcare and afterschool
- Provision of a full-time play therapy service for children who do not reach threshold for the Tusla Therapeutic Team and whose families cannot afford private therapy

Activities

- Continued operation of St. Brigid's Charity Shops – stocking low-cost, high-quality clothing and accessories, furniture and homeware
- Promote the shops as an integral part of St. Brigid's and a contributor to the circular economy
- Provide affordable childcare for children from 1 year to 12 years including out of school camps and afterschool service in St Brigid's Children Centre
- Provide a low-cost play therapy service for children who meet the criteria
- Provide low-cost counselling to adults and adolescents who meet the criteria.

National Outcome Area: Safety

Strategic Goal:

Staff are more empowered to support service users with areas of emerging need or concern

Objective 1:

Staff and volunteers have opportunities to learn about the emerging and existing issues impacting the lives and experiences of families and individuals in Waterford including minority groups and those with additional needs

Vision of Success

- St. Brigid's staff are aware of the diverse issues impacting the lives and experiences of families and individuals within the community

Activities

- Provide training and enhanced awareness for staff and volunteers on relevant issues including current legislation / human rights / rise of the far right / responding to racism / neurodiversity / disability
- Update and develop policies to ensure best practice
- Engage in outreach to capture the views and needs of families and individuals in the community
- Enhanced information sharing among staff and management throughout St. Brigid's
- Enhanced engagement with relevant organisations and networks locally, regionally, and nationally
- Facilitate peer support groups

Objective 2:

Staff and volunteers can recognise signs of abuse including domestic, gender and sexual based violence, child abuse, vulnerable adult abuse, and have the necessary skills and supports to respond appropriately

Vision of Success

- Families and individuals in St. Brigid's catchment area and beyond have access to support including services and signposting, which aims to enhance their safety and the safety of their families and communities

Activities

- Prioritise essential staff training and upskilling including Children First / Child Protection & Safeguarding; Signs of Safety; Infant Mental Health; LGBTQI; Domestic Abuse; Disability
- Review and update St. Brigid's policies and procedures in relation to Child Protection; Protection of Vulnerable Adults, Equality, Inclusion, and the structures in place in St. Brigid's
- Provide induction to new employees and volunteers which focuses on policies, procedures and practice
- Strengthen links with relevant agencies locally, regionally, and nationally

Objective 3:

Through interagency engagement, St. Brigid's endeavours to ensure that families and children are safe and protected from harm

Vision of Success

- Through an interagency and multidisciplinary approach St. Brigid's can support families and children to be safe

Activities

- Continued engagement with the Tusla Therapeutic Manager in relation to hosting 2 full-time Social Care Leader and 3 part-time Play Therapist posts for the Team
- Participate in and initiate the Meitheal process as appropriate to empower and support families to identify their own needs and strengths, and to support them to put a plan in place in collaboration with relevant services
- Continue involvement and progression work in relevant networks
- Ensure that all internal policies and procedures relating to safety are robust, in place and adhered to
- Identify, prioritise and provide essential and relevant Board, staff and volunteer training

National Outcome Area: Social Participation and Connection

Strategic Goal:

Facilitate and promote social participation, connection, and integration in the local community

Objective 1:

All families and all individuals are afforded the opportunity to connect and be included in their community

Vision of Success

- Families and individuals who have accessed services are thriving, having their needs met, and are more connected with and included in their community

Activities

- Maintain and facilitate existing groups including the Friday Morning Coffee Group for older women, the Men's Wellbeing Group, the Inner-City Parent and Toddler Group
- Re-establish the Intergenerational Group to bring together younger and older members of the local community
- Continue the development of the outreach service based in Portlaoise by engaging with relevant agencies to deliver a range of programmes and groups including Parent and Toddler Groups, Women's Groups, Community Allotments
- Engage with new communities in Waterford to encourage greater participation in the programmes and activities offered in St. Brigid's and to foster cultural enrichment
- Facilitate support groups and peer support groups by providing meeting and event spaces

Objective 2:

All families and individuals can access practical supports and resources to afford them the opportunity to connect and engage in their community.

Vision of Success

- A range of needs-led services and supports are available to families and individuals which give them the opportunity to connect and engage in their community

Activities

- Provide meeting space, and practical support to support groups, community organisations, and individuals.
- Provide practical support for the establishment of peer groups for families and individuals to interact socially and share skills and experiences
- Continue to refer individuals and families to Citizens Information Centre, National Advocacy Service and Social Prescribing to access relevant information pertaining to their needs
- Consolidate and build upon existing services based on available resources both financial and human.

Priority Area: Inclusion, Accessibility & Outreach

Strategic Goal:

Facilitate and promote social participation, connection, and integration in the local community

Objective 1:

Local issues identified by the community are highlighted at local, regional and national decision making structures

Vision of Success

- More resources are available to build capacity within the community so that people's needs are being met, and they feel more empowered to participate in society at whatever level they chose

Activities

- Continued engagement with local, regional, and national networks to collectively advocate for the voice of the community to be heard and acknowledged

Objective 2:

St. Brigid's is clear about the issues which impact on the lives and the experiences of the community it supports and its remit in terms of the services it provides.

Vision of Success

- St. Brigid's provides a range of supports and services which are evidence-based, and which respond to the identified needs of children, young people, families, and individuals in the community

Activities

- Enhanced community consultation in Waterford Inner City and Portlaw to gain information and insight into the lived experiences of individuals, children and families and the issues which impact their lives
- Increased engagement and collaborative work with other agencies working within the St. Brigid's catchment area.

Objective 3:

Promote St. Brigid's as a one stop shop for family and individual support through a community development approach including supports or referrals.

Vision of Success

- St. Brigid's provides supports and services in response to a wide range of needs in the community
- Members of the community in St. Brigid's catchment area are aware of the services and supports it provides

Activities

- Host an open event in 2025 to mark 40 years of St. Brigid's in the community, to celebrate the transfer of the Centre from the Mercy Order to St. Brigid's and to launch the 5 Year Strategic Plan
- Install an info board in the Yellow Road displaying all St. Brigid's activities
- Physical upgrades of the premises to ensure the Centre is visible and welcoming
- Develop a 'ready to go' pack containing information on range of services outside St. Brigid's
- Engage with stakeholders to increase understanding of the work of St. Brigid's and the limitations to its core remit.
- Appoint a dedicated member of staff to manage and update promotional materials, social media and the website to ensure that a cohesive message goes out to the community about what St. Brigid's does and does not do.

Priority Area: Organisational Development & Capacity Building

Strategic Goal:

We will aim to meet current and future demand for our services, in terms of resources, staff development, infrastructure and governance

Objective 1:

Strategically plan and coordinate St. Brigid's ongoing organisational development - through the provision of relevant training, access to appropriate external support and networks, and ensuring the organisation is compliant with best practice in relation to all areas of governance

Vision of Success

- 5 Year Strategic Plan in place
- Risk Register in place
- Compliance with all CRO and CRA requirements
- Compliance with the requirements of funders

Activities

- Establish an organisational training log
- Coordinate a facilitated annual Board training event
- Conduct regular review of policies
- Identify a dedicated staff member to assist the manager and the Board in relation to governance requirements.
- Engage external expertise as necessary including HR, Legal, Finance, Health & Safety, GDPR
- Engage with relevant networks

Objective 2:

Effective communication and teamwork between the Board, management, staff and volunteer team and between the various sections of St. Brigid's.

Vision of Success

- Everybody in the organisation knows that their contribution is valuable and appreciated
- A sense of cohesion prevails
- There is effective communication and teamwork across the organisation

Activities

- Develop feedback mechanisms to support effective collaboration and communication between the staff/volunteer team, senior staff team and the Board to include scheduled monthly and quarterly meetings and review of progress within the context of the Annual Action Plan.
- Coordinate an annual review and planning process with staff, volunteers and the Board to facilitate information sharing and feedback and to review progress within the context of the 5 Year Strategic Plan.
- The Board engages with staff & volunteers to organise wellbeing events to promote morale and team building

Objective 3:

Secure appropriate levels of funding for a sustainable future

Vision of Success

- St. Brigid's Family and Community Centre is sustainable in the long term
- The Centre is under the ownership of St. Brigid's.

Activities

- Engage with existing funders to ensure that funding levels are sufficient to meet the actual cost of delivering the service, including staffing costs, overheads, management costs etc.
- Engage with all relevant parties to complete the process in relation to the transfer of ownership of the Centre to St. Brigid's.
- Explore new funding sources
- Robust policies, procedures and protocols are in place to manage funding
- Financial admin staff have all necessary experience, skills, resources and support to carry out their work to a high standard.
- Provide training for staff in relation to completing effective funding applications

**Objective 4:
Strategically plan for recruitment and development of new Board members and staff members including ongoing succession planning**

Vision of Success

- St. Brigid’s Family and Community Centre operates under the guidance of a strong Board and staff team with the necessary skillset and experience to lead the organisation into the future

Activities

- Succession planning in relation to the Board and key staff is a regular agenda item at Board meetings
- Ensure robust recruitment policies and procedures are in place
- Implement a strategy to recruit new Board members
- Board reviews its current skillset to identify gaps
- Coordinate annual facilitated Board training
- The Board engages with the CRA and HR regarding requirements for governance and best practice

**St. Brigid’s FCC Voluntary Board of Management
(as of July 2025)**

- William O’Keeffe (Chairperson)
- Bill Deevy (Treasurer)
- Edward Ellis (Secretary)
- Joan Quinlan
- Mary O’Halloran
- James Farnan

Our Funders

- Tusla, the Child & Family Agency
- Pobal
- Department of Children, Disability & Equality
- Health Service Executive
- Department of Social Protection
- Revenue
- Waterford City & County Council
- Waterford Wexford Education & Training Board
- Dormant Accounts Fund
- National Forum of Family Resource Centres
- Waterford Area Partnership
- Treoir
- Waterford Lions Club
- Coiste Curam Leanaí Phort Láirge

