



**Wicklow Child & Family Project**

**Family Support Service**

**Annual Report**

**2013**



## Wicklow Child & Family Project - Annual Report 2013

The 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013 saw the official launch by Minister Frances Fitzgerald of the Wicklow Child & Family Project's 10 year celebration.

The following morning the Project held an open door for members of the local community to call in, meet the staff and take a look at what the project offers to families in the local area. The celebrations ended with a Family Fun Day on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2013 at the old Abbey Community College premises on the main street Wicklow Town.

There was a variety of artists showcasing their musical talents, demonstrations by local groups, children's disco, games, children's races, face painting, food stalls, adult tug o' war and much more.



The foundation of the Wicklow Child & Family Project 10 years ago was heavily shaped by a strong partnership between the Health Service Executive, Wicklow Working Together, relevant local agencies and members of the community.

The vision was to establish an imaginative project that would be a significant resource for both children and parents in the Wicklow area; supporting one of our most valuable institutions the family. This vision was successfully realised growing from strength to strength over the decade.

The project is funded through the Health Service Executive and now managed by County Wicklow Partnership. Recognition and appreciation is extended to the projects additional funders, as without their backing the many supporting and invaluable interventions would not be possible. East Coast Regional Drugs Task Force; HSE Lottery; The Department of Social and Family Affairs; ESB Electric Aid Ireland Fund; Department of Children & Youth Affairs – ECCE & CCS; County Wicklow Partnership; County Wicklow VEC; Wicklow County Council; Wicklow Town Council; Wicklow School Completion Programme;

### **Background:**

The Wicklow Child & Family Project provides a community based family support service to local families in Wicklow Town and surrounding areas. The project is managed by County Wicklow Partnership and funded through the Health Service Executive (HSE).

### **Management Company:**

The vision of County Wicklow Partnership (CWP) is to effect change in the county by supporting the social, cultural, economic and environmental well-being of individuals, families, groups and communities. County Wicklow Partnership's activities cover all of Co. Wicklow, except Bray area. CWP has a Service Arrangement with the HSE to manage two Family Support Services – Wicklow Child & Family Project & Arklow Springboard.

**Management Structure:**

CWP has a Board of Management that comprises representatives from Statutory, Voluntary & Community bodies.

**CWP Family Support Executive Committee:**

Mr. Frank d’Arcy - CWP CEO

Councillor Pat Casey - CWP Board member

Mr. Kevin Webster – HSE Principal Social Worker

Mr. James Dunne, Chairperson – Arklow Springboard Advisory Committee

Mr. Ian Daly – Wicklow Child & Family Project Advisory Committee

Ms. Christine Keegan - Wicklow Child & Family Project Manager

Ms. Martina Deasy - Arklow Springboard Family Support Service Manager.

The purpose of this committee is to:

- Monitor and ensure that Family Support Services are managed in keeping with the principles of the Springboard model and the Service Arrangement with the HSE
- Monitor and ensure the implementation of the aims and objectives of the service
- Monitor financial reporting
- Ongoing review of the services
- Make recommendations to the CWP Board of Directors

**Wicklow Child & Family Project Advisory Committee:**

- Comprises representatives from:
- Statutory sector - Voluntary sector - Community sector
- The purpose of the Advisory Committee is strategic planning, funding strategies, community liaison, promotion & networking
- The representative from the Advisory Committee on the CWP Family Support Executive Committee provides a channel between the 2 committees for sharing and disseminating information.
- The Advisory Committee meets approximately 6 times a year.

**Collaboration between Wicklow Child & Family Project & Arklow Springboard:**

County Wicklow Partnership has one Service Arrangement between themselves and the HSE for the delivery of Family Support Services within Co. Wicklow. The Managers of Wicklow Child & Family Project and Arklow Springboard believe that working together strategically benefits and strengthens the delivery of family support services within Co. Wicklow. Regular meetings are held between the Managers. The Project Workers from both services meet regularly to share resources, skills and knowledge. Joint Family Support Services policies and procedures have been developed, implemented and are reviewed on an ongoing basis:- Child Protection, Health & Safety, Staff Safety Policy, Complaints Policy, Lone Workers Policy and staff induction pack, all in line with HSE requirements.

### **Wicklow Child & Family Project Aims:**

The Project aims to provide services and support that improve the quality of life for children and their families. We work with families to increase their capacity to provide a safe and caring environment for their children and also promote the personal and social development of children and young people and parents.

Our work is underpinned by the following values:

- **quality** in all that we do
- seeking always to **empower** our clients
- **supportive and friendly** in our approach
- creating a **trusting** environment
- working in **partnership** with other relevant agencies

### **Strategies:**

- To deliver a range of quality family support services within the community.
- To continue to develop more effective interagency partnerships to enhance the services available to children and families within the community we serve.
- To continue to develop the Wicklow Child & Family Project so that we deliver excellent services which make a difference

### **Staff Team:**

Project Manager – Ms Christine Keegan,

2 f/t Project Workers – Ms Deirdre O’Sullivan, Ms Rachel O’Sullivan,

1 p/t Family Learning Programme Supervisor – Ms Kirsty Doyle,

1 p/t Child Care Assistant/Support worker – Ms Doreen Byrne, (left at the end of 2013)

1 p/t Financial Administrator – Ms Michelle Cox,

1 p/t Administrator/Receptionist – Ms Annabelle Wright,

3 p/t Community Employment Project Support Workers – Ms Roseanne Doyle, Ms Susan O’Neill,

Ms Joanne Marmulewska & Ms Leane Byrne (left during 2013),

Ms Amy Braun & Ms Judit Simko started in 2013.



**Project Premises:**

**The Mall, Wicklow Town:**

This is the Projects main office comprising main reception area, 3 offices, 2 meeting rooms, therapy room & family room.

**Parent's room, Holy Rosary National School, Wicklow Town:**

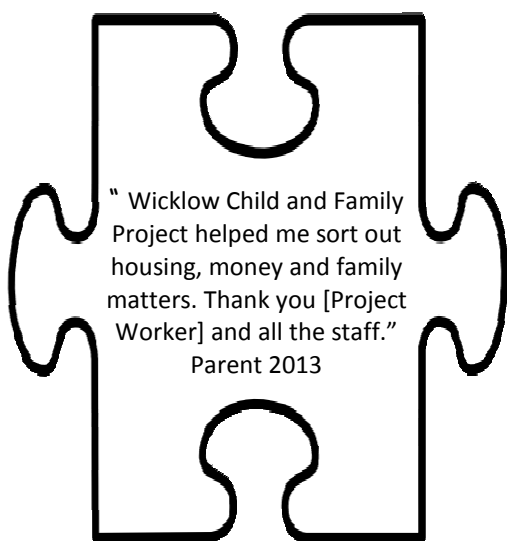
The Project has use of this room 5 mornings a week to deliver the Family Learning Programme.

**Unit C13 Wicklow Enterprise Centre:**

This unit is funded through East Coast Regional Drugs Task Force (ECRDTF) funding. The premises provides work space for the ECRDTF Rehabilitation Workers, meeting rooms for the ECRDTF Task Force, a therapy room for the ECRDTF Brief Intervention Counselling Service and a therapy room for the one to one therapeutic service delivered by the Wicklow Child & Family Project. This is a clear example of the projects strategy of developing effective interagency partnerships.

**No 3 Collins St Arklow:**

County Wicklow Partnership has a Licence Agreement with Crosscare for the use of part of these premises. The rent is funded through East Coast Regional Drugs Task Force (ECRDTF) funding. The premises provides work space for the ECRDTF Rehabilitation Workers, meeting rooms for the ECRDTF Task Force, a therapy room for the ECRDTF Brief Intervention Counselling Service and a meeting room for the Family Support Group. Living Life Counselling operate a service from these premises. This is a clear example of the projects strategy of developing effective interagency partnerships.



### Wicklow Child & Family Project Income 2013

HSE – Core funding	€296,209.74
HSE – St Louise’s – Room hire	€6,615
East Coast Regional Drugs Task Force – Brief Intervention Counselling Service, Family Support, Concerned other addiction counselling, kids groups, interagency summer camps	€65,000
HSE Lottery Funding – Family fun day, Christmas party	€5,000
East Coast Regional Drugs Task Force, small grants – Adult group, children’s personal development group	€3,080
Dept. Social & Family Affairs – Relationship, bereavement and child counselling	€3,900
Room Hire – General	€1,460
School Completion Programme – Summer camp	€500
ESB Electric AID Ireland Fund – Counselling to address suicide issues, balance from 2012 funding carried forward	€0
Wicklow County Council – FLP equipment, WC&FP family fun day	€1,000
Wicklow Town Council – FLP Gymboree, WC&FP activities	€800
OMCYA & Pobal – ECCE funding & CCS (FLP)	€30,608
<b>Total received</b>	<b>€414,172.74</b>

As shown above the HSE core fund for 2013 was €296,209.74, this was a further 5% reduction on the 2012 figure, however the cut was only implemented from July 2013. As these core funds are only sufficient for the operational day to day running costs of the service the Project actively sources additional funding in order to facilitate the delivery of identified programmes / activities for families working intensively with the Project staff and also families from the wider community.

**The Project would like to thank all our funders for their financial support during 2013.**

### **Financial Administration:**

The role of the Financial Administrator is to monitor all income and expenditure for the Wicklow Child & Family Project, including the Family Learning Programme and the East Coast Regional Drugs Task Force initiatives, to ensure the service keeps within budget.

Deal with all invoice queries, payment requisitions and online transactions on a monthly basis

Prepare monthly Board Report for the Manager and CWP Board of Directors

Prepare monthly financial reports for the CWP Family Support Executive on HSE core funds and external funding.

Record all external income & expenditure and prepare & submit monthly, quarterly & annual reports, as required, for external funders.

Compile a yearly forecast for HSE funding.

Ensure all accounts are kept up to date in accordance with each funder's requirements and ready for audit.

Keep accurate records of financial details for CWP Auditor.

Liaise with CWP Administration on a regular basis.

### **Front line services:**

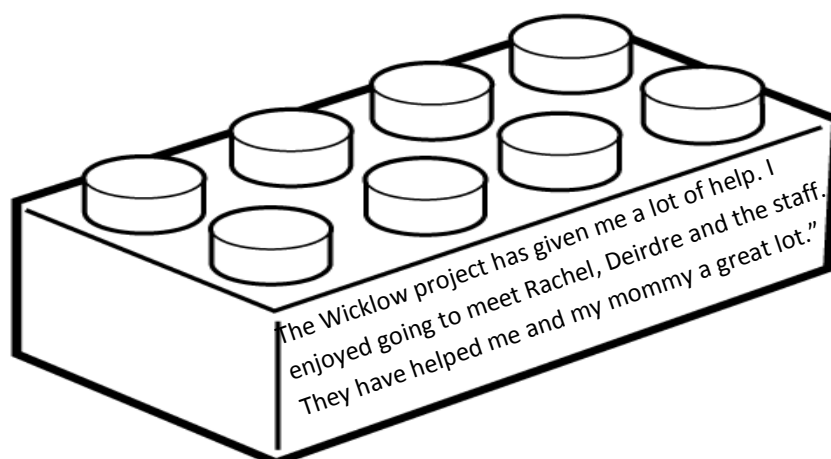
#### **Reception / Administration & Drop In facility:**

The Reception / Administration staff manage the Projects reception area ensuring that all visitors' needs are appropriately met; that there are relevant information leaflets available to the public; that enquiries from the general public, by either phone or drop in, are dealt with sensitively. If the nature of an enquiry cannot be dealt with by reception staff these are then referred on to the appropriate staff member for further advice and support. In 2013 there were 181 enquiries into the Wicklow Child & Family Project, of which 53 were by Drop In, 126 by phone and 2 by email.

Of these 181 enquiries 110 required additional work, 6 remained active for a period of time due to on-going needs and 28 families self-referred to the Project for further intensive support.

The enquiries mainly consisted of questions relating to family & relationship issues, education, counselling and social welfare.

Reception / Administration staff also undertake all other administrative work relevant to the day to day operations of the Project.



### **Overview of work undertaken in 2013:**

During 2013 the Wicklow Child & Family Project was involved in intensive family support work with families, either referred by other agencies or families who self-referred to the Project.

The intensive work with families involved either family group work or one to one work with individual members. This work was mainly carried out either at the main office or the family's home.

In addition adult and child groups were delivered, these groups are based on the specific needs of the client group.

In addition to the intensive work offered to families is the one to one therapeutic service for families who linked closely with the Project. The therapeutic service is available to adults, families and children.

The Project is also responsible for the management of the Wicklow Family Learning Pre-School Programme for families identified through the Wicklow Child & Family Project and other local agencies.

In partnership with the East Coast Regional Drugs Task Force the Wicklow Child & Family Project oversaw the delivery of the Brief Intervention Counselling initiative which is a service available to adults experiencing drug issues.

Community development initiatives undertaken were kids clubs, children & adult groups, out of school activities, seasonal activities, summer camps and outings.

### **Intensive Family Support Work:**

#### **Referrals:**

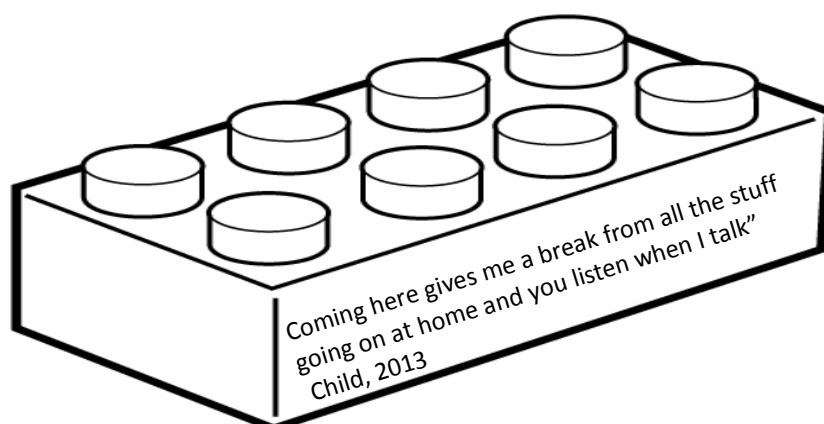
Wicklow Child & Family Project accepts referrals from agencies working with families such as:

HSE Social Workers, Schools, Public Health Nurses, Gardaí, I.S.P.C.C., WAY Project, G.P.'s, Addiction services, HSE disciplines and other relevant local agencies.

Families can also self-refer to the Project. A central aspect of any referral is the commitment by the family to engage with the service. All programmes of work with the family are by their consent and with their full agreement to participate in the programme.

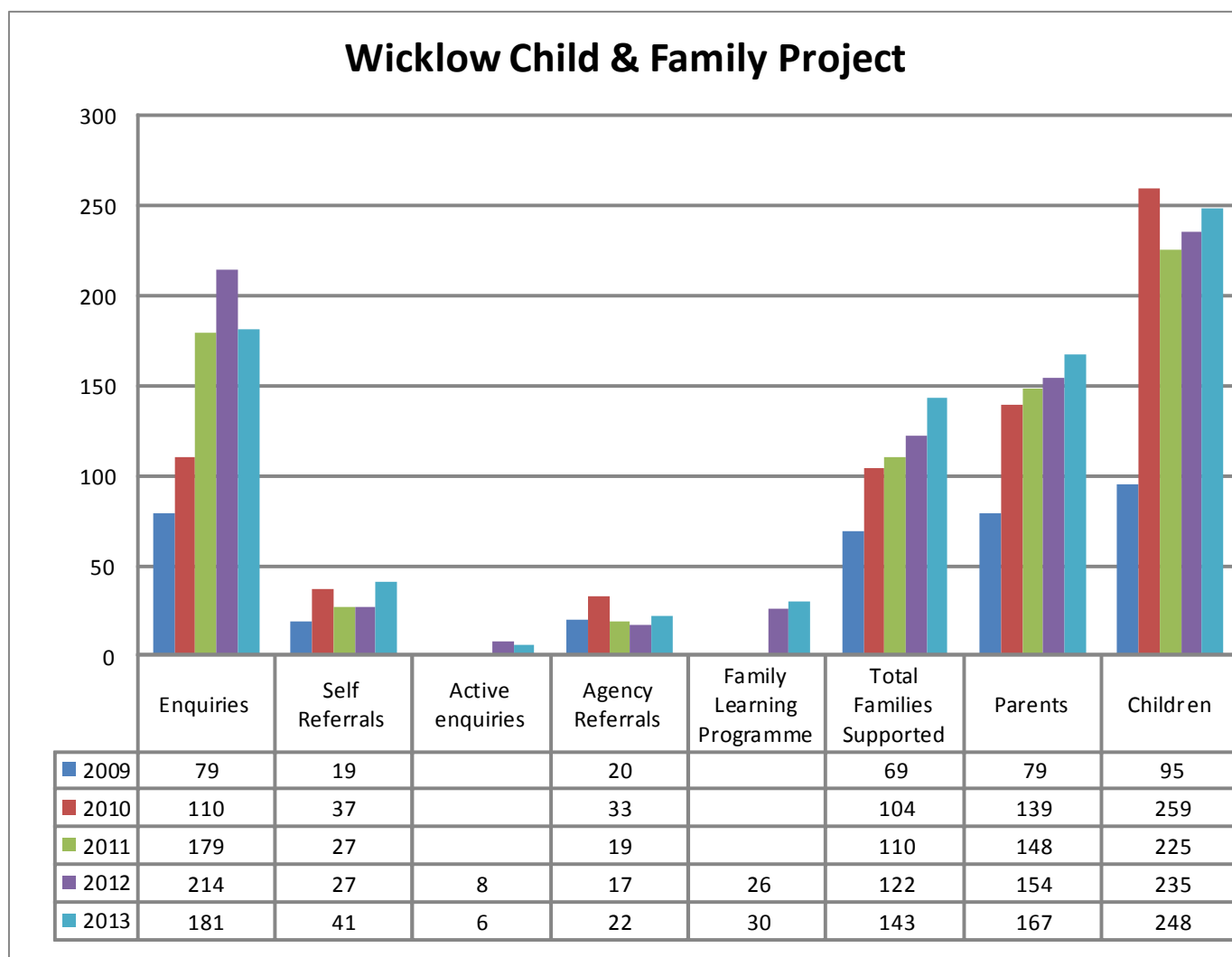
All work undertaken is strictly confidential except if issues occur around child protection and then all staff adhere to the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children – Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

The Wicklow Child & Family Project is a free service except for the counselling service which incurs a minimal fee.





## Number of families accessing the service from 2009 to 2013



As above figures show demand for family support from the project has increased on previous years. During 2013 there was an increase in both self-referrals and agency referrals into the project, the total number of families supported during the year increased from 122 to 143; this includes a number of families still accessing the service from the previous year.

### Referral Policy:

The Wicklow Child & Family Project aims to offer support to children, young people and families, in order to reduce the risk of neglect or abuse. We work with families to increase their capacity to provide a safe and caring environment for their children and also promote the personal and social development of children and young people.

The primary focus is to work intensively with children in the 0-12 year old age group and their families, but not excluding other age groups where an assessment of risk indicates that they can benefit from our support.

### **The Referral Process:**

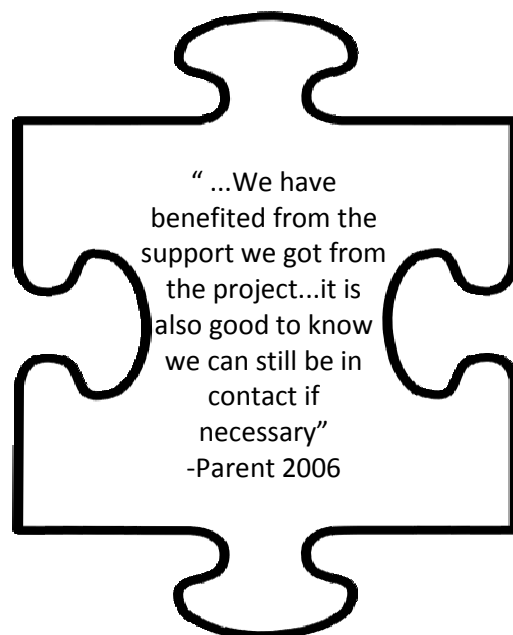
- Families fulfilling the relevant criteria are identified by the appropriate agencies.
- The Referrer completes the referral form, keeping the family involved in the process.
- If a family self refers to the project then the self-referral form is completed by the Manager with the family
- The Manager assesses the family referral and decides on the suitability of the Project in meeting their needs.
- The Manager allocates a Key Worker to each family referral accepted by the Project.
- An initial meeting is arranged with the Manager, Key Worker, the Referrer and the family, where appropriate.
- A Family Programme is drawn up in consultation with all members of the family, the Key Worker and other relevant agencies to determine how the identified needs can be met.
- Regular updates & review meetings are held with all relevant parties to assess progress and decide on future action.

### **Work undertaken by Project Workers:**

The nature of the work with the families is dependent on identified needs. Following assessment of the needs of the child, young person and his or her parents/guardians, individual and group based programmes of work are established for the family. This work can take place in either the project, family home or school. The work may involve weekly one to one meetings, home visits, accompanying clients to meetings with other agencies and other identified supports as required. Project Workers are provided with regular support and supervision in line with best practice.

The intensive family support work carried out consists of the following:

- Parenting skills – consistency, appropriate discipline & consequences, nutrition/personal care, attitudes towards education – this work is based on the Positive Parenting Programme
- Parent / child relationships
- Relationship issues
- Separation
- Behavioural difficulties
- Personal development
- Alcohol & drug dependency
- Domestic abuse
- Anger management
- Mental health
- Bullying
- Learning disabilities
- Housing
- Finance



## Group work:

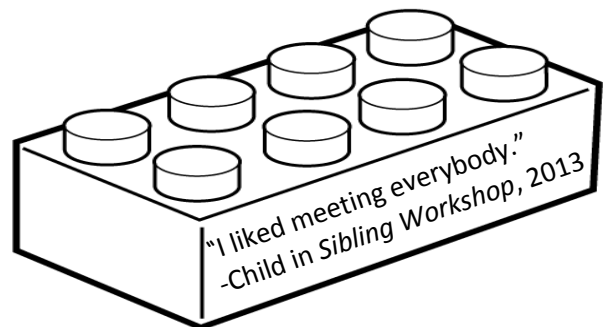
### Children's Group – Siblings workshop:

The aim of the course was to work with young people and their siblings to provide a safe and open discussion environment for children in families coping with mental health issues, addiction and recovery. This group remained focused around peer support and accurate information sharing regarding these topics.

The workshop ran for six consecutive weeks, 1 hour session per week. The group was managed by Ms Rachel O'Sullivan & Ms Roseanne Doyle. Five young persons aged 10-12yrs were identified from families closely linked with the project. These 5 young people each had a sibling within the age range from 6-8yrs. The children worked through activities which encouraged teamwork, positive choices, strengthening family support networks, creativity, goal setting and communication. The role of drug use and alcohol within their families was also explored. Activities were structured around sibling groups working together to achieve common goals. The work with these identified young persons and their sibling's emphasised and encouraged information sharing between family members and positive relationships between each other. Working with siblings allowed for the opportunity to build further social connections between them and improve social connections within their family.

The group activities and the discussion topics were introduced in a variety of formats which included

- Team quizzes
- Obstacle courses
- Mural work
- Painting & drawing
- Venn diagrams
- Group games and activities



### Outcomes:

- The children's participation and involvement in discussion increased as the workshop progressed
- The workshop helped to emphasise the importance and role of information sharing between family members
- The workshop helped in emphasising the importance of positive relationships between siblings
- The reluctance of siblings working together at the beginning of the workshop diminished as the group went on and the children demonstrated a new willingness to share experiences with their sibling
- Siblings began speaking more positively about their siblings strengths and differences
- The older age group began helping the younger members to engage with certain tasks which helped in role modelling positive relationships
- The workshop demonstrated a continued need for work with young persons around mental health issues and addiction & recovery as these processes are unique to each family system.

On completing the course the children received certificates recognising their accomplishment

**Parenting when Separated:**

The Parenting When Separated Programme was facilitated by Ms Deirdre O'Sullivan. Clients from Arklow Springboard were referred into the group. The group consisted of a core group of eight, who attended regularly. Even though the group did not have an equal gender balance it did not appear to affect the programme.

This initiative was part of a pilot programme being run nationwide and in conjunction with Parent's Plus, University College Dublin and the Mater CAMHS.

The goals of the programme were:

- To assist parents to solve co-parenting issues positively that help both child & parent.
- To help parents cope with the emotional impact of separation and learn stress management techniques.
- For the parents to help children cope with separation emotionally and practically.
- To advise parents on how to appropriately communicate with their child and the child's other parent.

**Outcomes:**

- All participants provided very positive feedback with regards to the child centred programme and maintained that they each learned something important that they would put into practice.
- Weekly evaluations were completed by the clients and all of them reported that peer supports were of great benefit to them.
- The evaluations also showed that the opportunity to discuss individual circumstances with others decreased perceived issues of isolation.
- Participants also highlighted that doing the programme encouraged them to think through scenarios prior to acting which lessened stress and conflict.

The feedback from the participants was extremely positive and links remain within the group.

**Parents group programmes:**

Several programmes were delivered during 2013 for parents who were engaged with the Wicklow Child & Family Project. The delivery of some of these programmes was only possible due to accessing funding through the V.E.C Adult Community Education sector.

Programmes delivered:

- First Aid
- Cookery
- Beauty
- Creative crafts
- Pilates
- Defibrillator training
- Digital photography

During 2013 rather than Wicklow Child & Family Project applying individually for funding through the VEC it was decided to link more closely with Ms Una McDonald, Home School Liaison, Colaiste Chill Mhantain, in order to strengthen the links between the parents groups from both agencies. Following meetings with Ms Brenda Delaney, VEC Community Education Facilitator, funding was applied for jointly and courses were delivered both at the Wicklow Child & Family Project & Coláiste Chill Mhantáin in the hope of offering parents a greater choice of courses and forging stronger connections between parents and staff from both agencies.

**Outcomes:**

- Improved confidence
- Improved wellbeing and mental health
- Parents realised the importance of giving themselves some time in their busy schedule
- Gained knowledge and learned new skills and interests
- Peer support
- Addressed social isolation
- Provided a social outlet
- Strengthened relationships between parents and project staff
- Positive effect on parenting children
- Interagency links provided access to additional courses
- Fostered an interest in learning and possible progression back into education

Between 8 and 10 participants engaged in these programmes which were facilitated by Ms Roseanne Doyle.

Based on ongoing evaluation with the participants these programmes proved very successful and with continuing support from the V.E.C courses will be delivered again in 2014.

**Therapeutic Services:**

The Wicklow Child & Family Project engages three Psychotherapists and two Play Therapists on a sessional basis to deliver both individual & family therapy to the families referred / self-referred to the Project.

During 2013 the Project sourced additional funding through the Family Support Agency, for bereavement, relationship counselling and child therapy; the East Coast Regional Drugs Task force, for family members dealing with addiction issues and ESB Electric AID Ireland, for individuals dealing with issues around suicide.

The need for one to one therapy at the Project is identified through the referrer, family member and project staff.

The therapeutic service is a valuable and integral part of the projects work. Clients have the opportunity to make more sense of their internal and external world enabling them to live more fully and effectively. Experiencing change at a therapeutic relational level allows them to take these changes into their relationships with significant others in their lives, thus promoting change.

Play therapy was offered to children from families closely linked with the Project. It provided a way for the children to express their experiences and feelings through a natural, self-guided, self-healing process. It supported children towards better social integration, growth and development.

### **Brief Intervention Counselling Service:**

The Brief Intervention Counselling service is a free counselling facility offered to adults experiencing difficulties with addiction. The service is managed by the Wicklow Child & Family Project and is delivered by 2 qualified counselling psychologists 2 days a week in both Arklow and Wicklow towns.

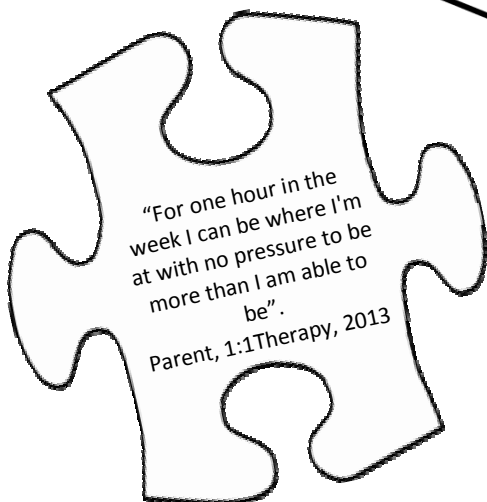
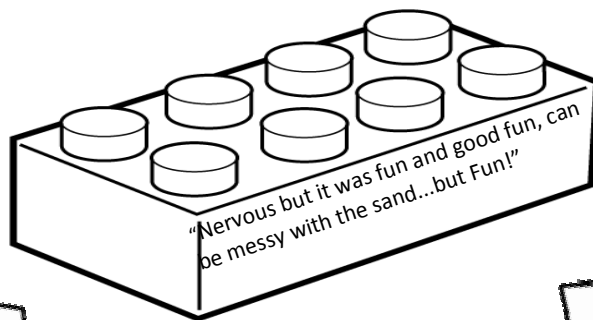
The purpose of the Brief Intervention Counselling service is to meet the needs of individuals affected by addiction issues. Clients are offered one to one brief intervention counselling to assist them in understanding and managing their substance use. The counsellors support the clients in making informed choices and decisions and assist them through a short series of goal focused sessions.

The Brief Intervention Counselling service is based on an interagency approach to service delivery. All agencies coming into contact with people experiencing addiction work closely together to identify clients in need of this type of intervention. This service is funded through the East Coast Regional Drugs Task Force.

### **Outcomes:**

- The brief intervention model provided clients with the opportunity of thinking differently about their substance misuse.
- A brief intervention approach proved a valuable tool for treatment for problematic substance misuse.
- The counsellors supported the clients in making informed choices and decisions through goal focused sessions
- The service allowed for access to information on other relevant services in the region
- Using a brief intervention model meant that a larger number of clients had the opportunity of accessing the service, this helps in the management of waiting lists

In 2013 a total of 1075 counselling sessions were delivered to clients (both children & adults) at a cost of €43,452. Department of Social & Family Affairs €5,590, ESB Electric AID Ireland €3,640, ECRDTF €32,037, HSE funding €1.415,



### **Family Learning Pre-School Programme:**

The Wicklow Family Learning Programme (WFLP) is a preschool facility for children aged 3-5 years and is located in the parent's room of the Holy Rosary Girls National School. The WFLP is committed to promoting the development of children and their families to realise their full potential in a safe and caring environment. We aim to provide the highest possible standard of childcare for the families using our service, by helping the children to develop cognitively, socially, emotionally and physically, at their own pace, through positive encouragement and caring support. We also actively encourage parental involvement in their child's learning.

In September 2013 the Family Learning Programme was again successful in securing funding through the Early Child Care Education Scheme & the Child Care Subvention Scheme. As the facility is community based and not for profit, securing funding through the ECCE & CCS schemes ensured sustainability of the service for a further year.

The Family Learning Programme clients were identified through the client group of the Wicklow Child & Family Project and the local community. The programme has 2 qualified members of staff and 2 Community Employment workers who implement the daily curriculum.

Early in 2013 the children in the Family Learning Programme took part in the 'Beep Beep' Road Safety initiative, learning all about how to stay safe on our roads. The children enjoyed the activities and still regularly arrive in school wearing their high visibility vests.

In spring 2013 we were delighted to receive funding from Wicklow County Council for our 'Garden Project'. This funding enabled us to invite Suzie Cahn of Carrig Dulra to join us for a number of workshops around gardening and growing your own produce at home. The project was a huge success with many of the parents getting stuck in to help us set up our vegetable garden and attending the workshops to learn how to grow vegetables and herbs at home for themselves. The children also enjoyed taking part in the workshops and reaped the benefits of their hard work when they enjoyed their peas, lettuces and a selection of herbs, coming into summer time.

The Family Learning Programme welcomed 11 new families into the service in September 2013, with many families returning with younger siblings or for a second year. We were delighted to host our Cheerio's morning again this year and were thrilled with the turnout which resulted in us raising more money than the previous year.

Our Halloween trip to Kia Ora farm was a great day out for parents and children alike. The children got the chance to dress as their favourite Halloween character and it also gave the parents the chance to get to know each other a little better.

The children were all very excited to visit Santa at the Wicklow Child and Family Project's annual Christmas party and all of the families that attended reported that they had an enjoyable day out.

We were fortunate to finish off our year with a very special trip to Rathwood to visit the man himself in his house and the children thoroughly enjoyed meeting the elves.

The staff of the Family Learning Programme would like to thank all the families for their support, participation and encouragement throughout the year.



## Community Development Initiatives:

### Family Fun Day:

One of the main highlights of 2013 was the free Family Fun Day held on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2013 from 12pm to 4pm in the grounds of the old Abbey Community College as part of the Projects 10 year celebrations. A significant amount of planning, by the staff, was needed in order to host the Wicklow Child & Family Project Family Fun Day. Despite all the hard work staff were delighted that approximately 900 members of the local community attended this celebration. We were very lucky with the weather, even though there was a bit of a scare when it looked like the heavens would open, but the sun shone brightly for the duration of the celebration.

The day started off with St Patrick's Pipe Band, Wicklow, escorting our guests of honour Mickey and Mini Mouse, who so kindly flew all the way from the USA, to be part of the celebrations.

Local children's groups were invited along to demonstrate and showcase their skills. The groups that attended were FYI dance, Lisa Heenan, School of Dance and Wicklow boxing club and wow what talent and dedication all these children had, they all gave fabulous performances.

The Park Singers from Dublin also kindly gave up their time to perform an array of songs. This group agreed to travel all the way down due to the fact that one of our very own staff members performs with the group regularly, Ms Rachel O'Sullivan.

The Buala Bus was invited along to showcase their work giving the community a chance to wander round it; reputable food vendors provided much needed refreshments. St Johns Ambulance were on standby in case of emergencies but thankfully were not needed. Side attractions were also commissioned for the day; these attractions were the African Drumming Circle, Julie Rose Puppeteer, bouncy castle and bouncy slide and Magda worked with children in the skill of vegetable Art, showing them how to turn everyday vegetables into works of art. We also provided a colouring area in which we had face painters, nail varnish creations and paint your own pottery piece, there was also a quiet area for family yoga. There was a kiddies disco where all the children's favourite characters joined them for a bop around the floor.

To bring back the spirit of days gone by, we had the traditional games, – guess how many sweets in a jar; guess the teddy bears date of birth. We also had games which were adapted by the project staff from the TV show 'The Cube', which went down a treat. The school sports day races made an appearance with all the old favourites such as egg and spoon race, three legged race, tug o' war etc. These races were held for every age and at times became quite competitive and a few cheats were spotted (the adults of course - children have more honour!!). While all this was taking place music was provided by our local band the 'BANDITS' who played all the favourites until the close of the day. This was a fantastic day at which staff and families had a really good time with a lot of people asking the big question ... when is the next one!!





**Kids Club:**

Kids Clubs is a CWP initiative under the LCDP Programme that is run in partnership with WC&FP. Clubs are run in the 74a Community House on the Ballyguile Local Authority Estate on Monday afternoons and are attended by children aged between 5 years and 8 years old. Children aged 5-6 years attend the first group which runs from 3.15pm to 4.15pm and the 7-8 year olds attend the second group from 4.30pm to 5.30pm.

Club activities focus on increasing literacy skills and supporting self-esteem. The Puddle Lane reading series and the Enchanted Learning Resource Site is used for reading materials and word activities as well as supporting arts and crafts activities for added fun and enjoyment. One cooking day was held in each term. Activities from "Helping Children to Build Self-Esteem" by Deborah M Plummer and Alice Harper were used with the older children. This culminated in an exhibition at the end of the summer term which presented the children's skills and achievements as they and their peers saw them. In the summer break the Kids Clubs were linked into the Ballyguile Area Women's Group's Community Arts Project where the children made and painted tiles which were subsequently mounted in the front garden of 74a. Towards the end of 2013 children were taught how to use Microsoft Word and were able to write and design poems for Halloween and Santa Letters.

Parents are asked to pay a small fee of €2 per child or €3 per family. This is given to the voluntary committee responsible for managing the 74a Community House to support the overhead expenses necessary to keep the centre open to the community.

**Summer Camps:**

In July 2013 the Wicklow Child & Family Project delivered a 3 day summer programme for children of Junior and Senior Classes and children of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> classes. The 39 children who attended were identified through the Wicklow Child & Family Project, the Holy Rosary National School and St Patrick's National School, Wicklow Town.

The children took part in a variety of activities including drumming workshops, arts and crafts, fishing, a visit to the maritime museum, outdoor sports activities, party games and dancing, and a visit to Eddie Rockets following the fishing expedition.

The outcomes from these activities were that the children had the opportunity of accessing a summer camp; mixing with their peers from school and local community; building & strengthening relationships between staff and children and taking part in activities that may not always be readily available to them.

This initiative was funded through the local School Completion Programme, Wicklow County Council and the East Coast Regional Drugs Task Force. Thanks go to Fishing Futures for their continued support.

**Interagency Summer Programmes:**

The Wicklow Child & Family Project worked closely with Croí Rath Naoi, providing staff support for their 2 week summer camps. Children engaged with the Wicklow Child & Family Project living in the Rathnew area were invited to attend the camp.

The benefit of working in partnership with other agencies means that a larger group of young people can be targeted and duplication of activities is prevented. It also provides the opportunity of sharing resources, staff knowledge and skills.

**Seasonal activities:**

Occasions like Easter, Halloween and Christmas are all celebrated in the Family Learning Programme and the Wicklow Child & Family Project. Various activities associated with these different events are carried out with the children and their parents.

**Easter:**

An Easter activity took place during the school holidays targeting children from the client group aged between 4-12 years. Three separate groups were delivered, group 1 for 4-6yrs, group 2 for 8-9yrs, group 3 for 10-12yrs.

The children took part in cookery, face painting, quiz games and arts and crafts. All activities had an Easter theme. Rachel, Deirdre, Joanna & Roseanne facilitated the activities. Some of the teenage children linked with the project were invited to act as leaders with group 3. This gave them the opportunity of acting as role models and provided them with new learning experiences.

**Christmas:**

At Christmas 2013 the Project organised and hosted their annual Christmas Party for families that work closely with Project staff. The main purpose of this party was to celebrate the festive season with our clients in a relaxed, fun and social setting rather than the usual focused and intensive work environment. 37 families and their children – 141 in total, attended the event.



Noticeable outcomes from the party were; strengthened relationships between staff and clients; the promotion and celebration of families in all their diversity; the emphasis of positive interaction between parents and their children. The event was thoroughly enjoyed by all who participated and the feedback was very positive. This event was only possible due to the success of sourcing additional funding through the HSE National Lottery Grant.

**Interagency work:**

An additional aspect of the Projects work is the effective interagency partnerships that enhance the services available to children and families within the community we serve. This annual report demonstrates the importance that the Project places on working closely with other local agencies for the benefit of the client group. The sharing of resources, skills and knowledge proves invaluable to families, prevents duplication of work and provides a much more cohesive approach when addressing family need. The Project works closely with agencies such as: MABS, Wicklow Town & County Councils, HSE Departments, Lucena, HSE Addiction Services, East Coast Regional Drugs Task Force, ISPCC, WAY Project, East Wicklow Youth Services, Community Mental Health Services, VEC Adult Education, Youthreach, SVP and with colleagues from our management company, County Wicklow Partnership. Wicklow Child & Family Project staff attended Arklow Springboard 10 year celebrations.

Rachel O'Sullivan was invited to attend St Catherine's parent's association meeting to inform them of the work of the Wicklow Child & Family Project and how the 2 agencies working closely together can benefit the client group.

Christine Keegan attended the launch of the Crosscare Community Initiative in Arklow.

Christine Keegan attended the launch of the young women and alcohol resource developed by the Kilcoole Young Women's group. Rachel O'Sullivan attended Wicklow Youthreach Open Day.

The Project also believes that being involved at committee level of other local agencies indirectly proves beneficial to families and also provides an opportunity to influence change. External committees that staff are involved in are: Wicklow School Completion, WAY Project, MABS, Local Education Committees, Wicklow Town Community Development Ltd, East coast Regional Drugs Task Force Treatment & Rehabilitation Committee, Wicklow Children's Services Committee, Rathdrum Youth Network and Wicklow Youth Mental Health Group.

#### **Mental Health Initiative ~ gr8 2 b yng:**

The Youth Positive Mental Health Initiative ~ gr8 2 b yng was organised by Wicklow Youth Mental Health Group (WYMHG) which is an inter-agency initiative comprising the Wicklow Child & Family Project, Croí Rath Naí, WAY Project, Wicklow Traveller's Group, East Wicklow Youth Service and the Wicklow School Completion Programme. The event was organised to highlight the importance of mental health to the young people in our community.

In 2013 an evaluation was compiled by the WYMHG in order to get a better understanding of what the young people in our community were looking for with regards to mental health awareness. The fundamental finding from the evaluation was that the young people wanted the mental health initiative to be more interactive. Taking this information into consideration WYMHG organised performances by Humourfit which was a dramatisation regarding a young person experiencing suicidal ideation. Angeline Pluck of East Wicklow Youth Services facilitated interactive workshops which looked at young people's perceptions of others, stereotyping and how initial judgements can be misleading.

The event took place on October 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> 2013 specifically targeting young people in Transition Year from Coláiste Chill Mhantáin, East Glendalough, Dominican Convent and Youthreach students. Over 300 hundred young people took part over the two day event, with an equal amount of male and female students. Due to its success it was decided that this would be rolled out each year as part of the Transition Year Programme. All students who took part received a certificate of participation for their T.Y. portfolio.

This event was funded through County Wicklow Partnership, Wicklow Town Council, Wicklow County Council and Wicklow School Completion.

#### **East Coast Regional Drugs Task Force (ECRDTF):**

As shown above, the Wicklow Child & Family Project continued to oversee the delivery of the Brief Intervention Counselling service. In addition the Wicklow Child & Family Project made available a facility to the Ray of Hope Family Support Group that provided information, guidance, resources and knowledge. This enabled them to build their capacity to provide mutual support to group members dealing with addiction in their family, in order to facilitate them to find inner strength to cope. In July 2013 the family support group became a stand-alone peer led group; they continued to meet in House No 3 Collins St Arklow.

Funding received through the ECRDTF also enabled the project provide therapeutic support too adults experiencing difficulties with another family members addiction; deliver group work with children linked with the project, these groups focused on specific identified needs; and provide training to staff from ECRDTF funded projects and other relevant agencies.

## **Training:**

During 2013 the Wicklow Child & Family Project organised 2 training events funded through the ECRDTF. This training was open to ECRDTF funded projects and other relevant agencies working in the area of family support or addiction.

1. As a follow on from training delivered in 2012 One Family were invited to do a refresher training day to revisit, review and build on the One Family Train the Trainer Family Communications programme. The aim was to identify challenges in using the learning, gaps in skills facilitating elements of the programme and to explore further sections of the trainer's manual relevant to work with families. **Outcomes** – coming together to exchange information, networking, sharing of experiences in using the manual, learning, increased confidence in using the manual, sharing perspectives and re-motivation. The trainer reported that there was excellent participation, high level discussion on using the learning with clients, adapting the manual to one to one or group work and that the professional approach to the training enhanced and enriched the experience for all.
2. The project engaged Joanna Fortune, Solamh, Parent - Child Relationship Clinic, to deliver one day training for staff working with children who live with addiction in the family. The aim was to deliver a specialised training programme to raise awareness of the impact of addiction on children and families, as well as equip staff working with these families with a requisite practical tool kit to do this work effectively. Areas covered were stages of development, attachment cycles, intergenerational transmission of trauma between parents and children and the difference in working with children from these family backgrounds and how to keep parents engaged as part of the work. 13 people participated in the training. **Outcomes** – all participants stated that their expectations of the day were fully met, with some saying that they were exceeded; all stated that they would recommend the training to others, all stated that the theory and especially the practical application of the theory would positively influence them in their work with children and families living with addiction.

## **ECRDTF Small Grants:**

The Wicklow Child and Family Project were successful in securing 2 separate amounts of funding in 2013 from the ECRDTF small grants. This enabled the project to deliver 2 programmes, 1 for adults and 1 for children.

### **Equine Assisted Learning – Rag Tree:**

The programme took place over a 3 day period during the mid-term break in October 2013. Four children aged 12-14yrs took part in this initiative, presenting issues were: challenging behaviour, difficulty in participating in group activities, limited social skills and poor response to positive criticism and instruction. Rag Tree Equine Assisted Therapy supports participants in learning about themselves, others and their interpersonal interactions, by engaging in activities with horses. The programme was adapted to meet the individual needs of each participant. They worked with the young people in a non-threatening manner in order to change dysfunctional behaviour patterns and promote positive change. The therapy also aimed to assist the participants in developing positive outlets for unresolved emotional and psychological conflict, equipping them with positive tools in order to break cycles associated with families with a history of addiction issues.

The outcomes for the young people were that they developed more positive self-awareness enabling them to address personal issues more appropriately. An increase in personal self-awareness also equips the young people with a greater ability in taking personal responsibility, problem solving and boundaries. All these life skills assist the young people in making positive life choices in the future.



**12 week programme for adults living with a family member's addiction:**

The aim of the course was to explore the family dynamic in addiction, early development and how this shapes the person; the roles people take on in coping with the family dynamic, explore and recognise co-dependent behaviour and the symbolic loss experienced by the family. 12 people completed the training. The outcomes for the participants – they felt they were provided with a comprehensive understanding of addiction and the trans-generational cycle of addiction and how addiction impacts on the family. They gained a better understanding of the adjustment people make to accommodate addiction, by examining their own role in the family and how this may possibly be sustaining the addiction. The group reported they came away with more knowledge of the communication process in the family, and how stressors such as addiction impact on the family. They realised the importance of boundaries, co-dependency and enabling behaviour alongside the loss associated with addiction for them and their families and felt the course equipped them to begin to look after their own needs. On-going evaluation was carried out through participation in group activities, role plays and collages as a way of assessing the participant's understanding of the material delivered.

**Co Wicklow's Social inclusion Week 2013:**

Wicklow Child & Family Project organised a coffee morning as part of Co. Wicklow's Social Inclusion Week 2013. Social Inclusion week provides groups and organisations from across the county an opportunity to showcase the excellent work they are doing on the ground to combat poverty and disadvantage and to improve quality of life for everyone. The coffee morning provided homemade cakes and buns made by the children & their parents who participated in our Family Learning Programme; the Kids Club and the Project. The event was well received.

**Cheerio's Childline Breakfast Morning 2013:**

In October 2013 the Wicklow Child & Family Project hosted a Cheerio's Childline Breakfast Morning in the Family Learning Programme to raise money to support the valuable work that Childline undertakes in helping to make a measurable difference to the lives of children and young people in Ireland. The Project raised €50 for this event.

**Acquired Brain Injury cake sale:**

The parents group supported by Roseanne Doyle took part in the Acquired Brain Injury cake sale to raise funds for this valuable and much needed service. As well as organising the event the parents group did all the baking and were successful in raising €130 for this event.

**Youth Group Rathdrum:**

During 2013 the Wicklow Child & Family Project along with EWYS Drugs Education Worker, EWYS Development Worker, Arklow School Completion Coordinator, Avondale Community College Home School Liaison, Gardaí, Rathdrum Community representative and Croí Rath Naoi continued to explore ways of addressing possible gaps in service provision for teenagers in the Rathdrum and surrounding areas.

**Society of St Vincent De Paul Sunshine Holidays:**

In 2013 the Wicklow Child & Family Project once again linked with the Society of Vincent De Paul Sunshine Holidays. The project nominated children between the ages of 7–11 from the families closely linked with the service to take part in their holiday programme. For many children we work with this is their only opportunity to have a holiday. Feedback from children who have linked with this initiative has been very positive.

**Training & Seminars & Information:**

Despite restrictions on training, due to budget cutbacks, the Project was successful in accessing staff training either at no cost or minimal cost. Having the ability to facilitate staff in accessing training improves staff morale, ongoing professional development and also increases the skills base within the project, which in turn benefits the client group.

In May 2013 2 staff members completed third year in the Social Studies (Applied Social Care) Degree. Both staff members moved on to 4<sup>th</sup> year in September 2013.

Other training & seminars included: -

Symposium - embedding a children's rights approach into the new Child & Family Support Agency, Health & Safety information session, HACCP, HSE domestic, sexual & gender based violence training, HSE putting analysis into assessment, Outdoor space seminar (WCCC), responding to intimidation seminar (ECRDTF), ECDL, craft training, web design, ECRDTF Communications Event, The Unplanned Journey—helping families and individuals after a death.

**Additional services carried out at the Wicklow Child & Family Project:**

- St Louise's assessment & therapeutic team delivered an outreach service two days a week at the Projects main office
- Several HSE personnel are regularly facilitated by the Project in providing rooms for one to one work, supervised access arrangements or meetings
- MOVE – men overcoming violence - hold their group meetings at the WC&FP premises
- Various local groups and agencies used rooms at the Projects main office

## Summary:

Even though 2013 was yet another year of challenge, uncertainty and change it was also a year where the project, through its 10 year celebrations, had an opportunity of showcasing the valuable work that has been carried out over the past decade. Thanks go to Minister Frances Fitzgerald for launching this event.

The Wicklow Child & Family project still awaits the changes expected due to being brought under the new Child & Family Support Agency in 2014. Even though change can be challenging the project hopes it will have a positive impact, especially as the establishment of the Agency will bring a dedicated focus to child protection, family support and other key children's services for the first time in the history of the State.

Through our involvement in the Children's Services Committee we will at least have an active role in shaping these changes.

Further challenges for the Project during 2013 were the ongoing economic uncertainty; changes within HSE structures, (both at local and national level), increased demand and ongoing HSE budget cuts. All have impacted on the Project's front line services.

The increased demand meant that the project in some ways became reactionary with limited time to develop preventative measures and services. Gaps continued to be identified in the services available to families in the local area. Without sufficient budgets and the personnel to implement and progress services, it is felt that limitations are being placed on the long term benefits to vulnerable children and families.

However in spite of the challenges there have been many positive and encouraging outcomes;

- Securing ECCE & CCSS funding resulted in the continuation of the Family Learning Programme
- Securing funding through the Family Support Agency, ESB Electric AID Ireland and East Coast Regional Drugs Task Force ensured the continuation of the Therapeutic Service
- Project staff continued to meet the demand of referrals and enquiries to the Project
- Identifying & securing external funding meant Project staff were in a better position to deliver a wider variety of interventions to meet the needs of the client group
- Maintaining additional staff support through the local Community Employment Programme
- Being part of the Parenting when separated pilot programme being run nationwide and in conjunction with Parent's Plus, University College Dublin and the Mater CAMHS
- Accessing staff training which supported continuing professional development and increased the skills base of the Project
- Maintaining a strong relationship with Social Work Teams in Wicklow & Bray for the benefit of our client group
- The vast range of supports offered during 2013 to children and families, either on a one to one or in a group
- Effective and successful inter agency initiatives
- Positive collaboration between agencies working with families in the local community

As this Annual Report demonstrates the Project continued to provide an extremely valuable and highly respected service to families in need within the local community. This has only been achieved by the consistent hard work of all the staff.

The Wicklow Child & Family Project will continue to deliver a range of quality family support initiatives for the benefit of vulnerable families in the community, maintain and strengthen links with statutory, voluntary and community organisations, continue to develop effective interagency partnerships to enhance services available to children and families and further develop the Project in order to deliver excellent services which make a difference.

The Wicklow Child & Family Project would like to thank all who supported the service in 2013 including County Wicklow Partnership, the Health Service Executive, local agencies and the organisations that continue to grant funding for much needed initiatives.

I finish this report with a quote by JK Whittaker:

*“If we think about it, save for the vagaries of birth, errant biology,  
class and status, or simply circumstance, we are all but a half step  
away from the ‘other’ families we describe as in need of service or ‘at risk’.  
In the final analysis, it is not ‘us’ and ‘them’.  
It is all of us. Together.”*

Ms Christine Keegan, Manager  
& all the staff of Wicklow Child & Family Project 2013