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Community Development

Your comments

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1. Background

The FRC programme is Ireland's largest family support programme delivering universal services to families in disadvantaged areas across the country based on a life-cycle approach.

The aim of the FRC programme is to combat disadvantage and improve the functioning of the family unit

There are 109 communities supported through the Child and Family Agency's Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme providing services and supports to local communities.

A central feature of the FRC programme is the involvement of local people in identifying needs and developing needs-led responses. FRCs involve people from marginalised groups and areas of disadvantage on their voluntary management committees. This approach ensures that each FRC is rooted in the community and this, in turn, makes it a vehicle for delivering other programmes in the community. FRCs are participative and empowering organisations that support families while building the capacity and leadership of local communities.

FRCs provides a range of universal and targeted services and development opportunities that address the needs of families.

Each FRC operates autonomously working inclusively with individuals, families, communities, and both statutory and non statutory agencies.

The Greystones Family Resource Centre was founded in 2002 to offer help and advice across a range of issues that affect individuals and families in the communities of Greystones, Delgany, Kilcoole and Newtownmountkennedy. We support everyone, regardless of their socio-economic situation, particularly those who may not have a voice. We work to limit disadvantage and social exclusion. We work with a wide range of stakeholders right across the county, including the PPN, CYPSC, Wicklow Sports Partnership, Music Generation, Community Gardai, Residents' Associations, Tusla, East Coast Taskforce, the HSE, local schools and community groups. The GFRC has been involved for several years in the work to bring the Jigsaw Youth Mental Health service to Wicklow.

The GFRC offers a range of supports to the community:

Play therapy is provided at a low cost for 3-18 year olds. It works to help children safely work through their emotions and improve behavioural issues and relationships.

Low Cost Counselling for children, teens and adults. Counselling is valuable as an aid to personal growth. It is of particular relevance in times of crisis or transition and can also be a help in problem solving.

Domestic Violence The GFRC works in partnership with the Bray Women's Refuge. Our community based domestic violence service, part-funded by the Department of Justice works with women, men and children who are victims of domestic violence by providing support in the following areas:

Rainbows Programme This is funded by Tusla and facilitated by GFRC volunteers, supporting children affected by bereavement or parental separation. We are supported in this work by St Laurence's National School, who provide space for the programme.

Community Education

We work with the KWETB and volunteer tutors to deliver community education to those living in our catchment area

Community Groups

We support a number of community groups and organisations

Community Events

We support the local community in the organisation of a range of events throughout the year. These provide an opportunity for people to come together in a relaxed setting

Summer Project & Holiday Activities

We run a summer project and holiday activities for local children

2. County development plan supporting community development and family support

2.1 Facilitating the delivery of community infrastructure

The Greystones Family Resource Centre offers a strong community based infrastructure for delivering programmes and engaging with the local community to provide services and initiatives that meet local needs. The GFRC offers expertise, community knowledge and a safe space for anyone who wants advice, support or onward referral.

The County Development Plan (CDP) should identify the infrastructure needed for specific population sizes as in the previous plan.

For example, a town the size of Greystones, the second largest in the county (Census 2016) should have a Multi-purpose Community Resource Centre, which has not been delivered in the life of the previous plan. A strategy should be put in place to ensure that the infrastructure is delivered rather than simply listed. This is even more urgent, with the continuing expansion of the population in the greater Greystones district since 2016.

We would like to see a large multi use community/resource centre that is for the primary use of the community. This centre could be used to house a number of community groups (FRC, mens sheds, youth groups, other community groups) and used to host agencies and organisations from outside the Greystones area , resulting range of services and supports to the community.

The centre could also utilised as a space for all ages and needs within the community to gather throughout the day for toddler groups, community groups, courses, after-schools, youth cafes and so much more. Similar spaces have been established in areas such as Bluebell where the Bluebell Community and Youth centre and the F2 Centre in Fatima which both offer fantastic spaces and opportunities for the whole community.

We are working to our limits in the space we have here in Burnaby Court and the spaces we can rent for larger activities.

However, we have no room to expand and grow alongside the growing community. Before long, the community will develop issues that we could help address if we had the space and the capacity. A dedicated community space could not only be used and run by the FRC but also shared with other community groups, organisations and stakeholders within the wider community. It is important that the community services and supports, like those we offer grow and develop alongside the community and its needs. At the moment, the population of Greystones is growing at a much faster rate and we would like to see issues being addressed early rather than waiting for problems to occur.

It is important to us that any community space in Greystones is open and accessible to all community members. That there are facilities included which support anyone with limited mobility, that have young children, is on good transport routes etc. Therefore, a community/resource centre in Greystones should be able to offer ground floor access, private/quiet areas for counselling or play therapy, a space where people can wait for their children who might be attending our services, a large multi use space such as a hall that can be used for larger groups, office space, storage space, open space where members of the community can come and socialise and share a coffee/tea with each other and the workers, space that the young people of the community can have ownership of and that is for their sole use, outdoor space (grass area, allotments, workshed space), parking and the facilities to offer a wide range of varied opportunities to the community.

If we were able to bring a number of groups and organisations in the community together then we could really foster a space that is open and welcoming, that supports people in the community from womb to tomb and where we are all working together towards common goals.

Please see the Bluebell CDP website <https://bluebellcdp.ie/> or the case study of Fatima Groups United FRC (the F" Centre) in 'Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities' the new 5 year government strategy supporting the community and voluntary sector for examples of what could be achieved in Greystones.

2.2 Facilitating improved physical access to community infrastructure and services;

There is an onus on the County Development Plan to ensure that land use is strategically managed in such a way that it promotes equity across social groups in terms of access to community infrastructure and services. This includes equality proofing planning, housing, infrastructure and economic development. All socio-economic development in the county should be guided by community development principles.

Communities need to find more and new ways of developing social outlets which bring people together and reduce isolation. This means developing and maintaining local facilities and services as much as possible. These spaces must be accessible to all hence transport and affordability must be factored into development.

The plan should include a focus on the use of primary and secondary school buildings for community use, particularly since many families in localities have fundraised and paid for their development/upkeep.

The plan should incorporate policies which fully support the ongoing improvement in the provision of Community Facilities, Education, Childcare, Arts and Culture and facilitates and complements the implementation of the forthcoming Local Economic and Community Plan.

2.3 Facilitating the maintenance, restoration and upgrading of cultural and natural heritage of communities, environmental upgrading and general actions to enhance the environmental, amenity and physical attributes of communities.

The cultural and natural heritage of the county must take priority over short term economic gain. Community facilities should be integrated with environmental and cultural amenities to provide a more strategic and cohesive approach to community development in the county.

The county development plan can support accessible arts in the community by continuing support for and increasing resources to the voluntary and community sector for art and culture initiatives.

3. Conclusion

The County Development Plan should continue to include high level goals to ensure the provision of adequate community and social infrastructure as well as providing open space for recreation, environmental and civic benefits. The Greystones Family Resource Centre and multi-use community space should be considered a core part of support infrastructure in the county and should be provided with adequate space and resources to contribute to continued sustainability and community development in the county.