

Western Traveller & Intercultural Development

Community Resource & Youth Service Provider



Annual Report 2020



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Introduction

The year 2020, will be forever remembered as the year of COVID-19, the year in which the world stood still and people reevaluated their lives. Everyone has been affected in some way, not being able to visit loved ones, the closure of their businesses, others being put on the pandemic payment or Revenue's Wage subsidy scheme's, working from home, children being unable to go to school, the fear of going out, but people rose to the challenge, they stayed at home, they supported and protected the elderly and vulnerable.

Here at Western Traveller and Intercultural Development (WTID) we made it our mission to support all in the community of Tuam.

The following report sets out the many ways in which all members of staff worked in an integrated way on many projects and initiatives to help assist and facilitate the people of Tuam. As always, a notable characteristic of WTID is a teamwork approach.

All members of the staff work in an integrated way on many projects and initiatives, some of which may be additional to their direct roles. This team approach adds value to the work of a small organisation where different skills are maximised for the benefit of the community. WTID maintains a focus on the needs of the community as its primary motivation for action. The organisation has developed and cultivated a range of mutually beneficial relationships with a variety of service providers that has ensured the leverage of funding and partnership approaches to work.

This year's Annual Report is designed in a slightly different way this year, however still setting out the accomplishments of the organisation in 2020.

Tom Reilly
Chairperson

COVID-19

In March 2020 in line with HSE and government guidelines the staff of WTID began working from home. Staff members continued connect with each other via phone and email, a WhatsApp group was started as a way to get general information out to team members and once a week a team meeting was held on an online platform this ensured that all staff members were kept up-to-date.

Western Traveller created a work from home document for staff. A quick guide to reaffirm and share some typical working from home practical steps that staff could take to ensure that they stay engaged, proactive and importantly connected to the service whilst working remotely. During this time the staff and managers continued to work with HSE, TUSLA, County and local groups with regards to accommodation, halting sites, self-isolation pods and any other issue that the community may have had.



Mitigation plan

A mitigation plan was created with the aim of identifying policies and actions that could be implemented in order to strengthen our efforts to reduce the risk and lessen the impact of COVID-19 on the Traveller community in Tuam - through a structured collective response.

It provided guidance for key tasks the project was to take in order to remain connected with the local Traveller community, and be able to get up-to-date relevant information out to the community at a time when people are asked to keep apart physically. Western Traveller provides information to the Traveller community in relation to health and well-being, education and accommodation.

The Plan highlights some specific relevant information and signposts to relevant advice/guidance available on the HSE, Department of Health and/or Government websites. Government advice changes according to latest developments.

A mitigation plan was submitted to the HSE and they very happy with it. The plan was fluid document which is be up dated as needed.



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The packs were delivered to Tuam Community Childcare Service at 10am on Friday 8th April 2020 where Martin Ward (Youth Work Manager) gave them out. The packs were given out at 5-minute intervals with the first family arriving at 11pm. The families will also be asked to take the packs and go, not to hanger about the building.

The feedback from all the families who received the packs was excellent.



Care packs for the over 60's

PHC and Childcare staff worked on a SICAP grant application to get funding for care packs for the over 60's. The PHC team made a list of all who would be legible for a pack, there were 40 packs in total.

Local shops were used to fill the packs with food items, cleaning products and disinfectants and the STAR project added literature on cocooning, and information from Age Action Ireland to the packs.

The packs were delivered by Martin (Youth Work) and Kathleen Ward (CHW).



Masks

Bridget (CHW) made masks for both adults and children. These masks were given out to members of the Traveller community in Tuam along with staff members who were not working from home and still engaging with the public.

Funding was received from GRD for materials and thread to enable the masks to be made.



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Primary Health Care



Health as an area of work is one of the most significant for WTID. The overall aim of WTID's Primary Healthcare Programme (PHC) is to improve the health status and quality of life for Travellers in Tuam and its environs by identifying the community's specific health requirements and the necessary health service provision. WTID implements one of the most successful PHC Programmes in the country and currently employs seven Community Health Workers (CHW's) on a part time basis.

COVID-19

An excellent document was produced by the PHC team which set out how and what the organisation would say when making a telephone call to members of the community on behalf of WTID regarding COVID-19. Included in the message are how to introduce yourself. Information on preventing COVID-19, what the symptoms are and what to do if you have them, and also useful phone numbers.

PHC additionally notified people of what do they do if they were finding it difficult due to self-isolate, and when, where and how do they get tested.

The PHC Cooperator continued to have teleconferences with Child and Family support groups and agencies, and posted relevant, up to date and factual based information the on WTID Facebook page daily.

The PHC cooperator worked with a staff member of the STAR Tuam Project to product a video on important of continuing with vaccinations of children, health checks etc. They also produced a number of videos on social distancing, handwash, wearing a mask and the important of following these rules.

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Youth Work



Youth Project currently employ one staff member with the support of 2 CE scheme workers, these workers have to be identified and trained as youth workers and introduced to the NQSF. There is a small group of Volunteers which consists of 6 people.

COVID-19

Although COVID-19 made it very difficult to run youth groups, the youth work manager still managed to continue to be there for the young people of Tuam, using a variety of online platforms, technology and when permitted small group activities.

Facebook was up dated on a regular bases with gardening videos - which proved to be very successful, videos of social distancing, the impacts of COVID-19, helpline and online activities. As well as Facebook information was also put on Instagram and Twitter about COVID-19.

Youth work supported and helped with the development and dissemination of the resource packs working in partnership with Tusla and GRETB's School Completion on.



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Summer program

A summer program was run over 2 weeks from the 22nd July 2020 it was from 10-30am to 1-30pm, number were limited and split in to two age groups, week 1 10-13yrs and week 2 14 – 17yrs. The activities were mainly outdoors and consisted on camping skills, traditional cooking, soccer and games.



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A camp workshop was held in August for 13-16yrs at the allotments, Parkmore Tuam. This workshop included outdoor skills, cooking and a scavenger hunt.



In August the youth work manager was able to take a small group fishing.



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A small number of young people were also Jumping for Joy in August, thanks to the Tuam school, completion program and Dessie Keegan, who made the trip possible.



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STAR TUAM



The NTRIS Tuam pilot project is a joint initiative of the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Justice and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. This pilot project is one of many initiatives that has developed from the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTIRS) 2017 - 2021. The overarching objective of the project is to improve the attendance, participation and retention of Traveller children and young people in the Tuam area. The Tuam pilot project is made up of four staff members. Bridget Ward and Martin Ward our Education Workers, Erin Conway is a Home School Community Liaison Coordinator and Deirdre Swords is an Educational Welfare Officer. The pilot has 3 key goals. The pilot team are currently consulting with key stakeholders around these 3 goals and this survey forms part of that consultation.

Supporting Travellers and Roma

The Pilot has 3 Overarching Goals that in turn direct the team

Goal 1

Students – To improve the learning experience and outcomes for Traveller and Roma students in schools in the pilot areas.

Goal 2

Parents and Guardians – To improve parental/guardian engagement with the school community and foster an appreciation of the value of education among Traveller and Roma communities.

Goal 3

Schools – To improve attendance, participation and retention with the aim of improving the educational outcomes of Traveller and Roma Students.

COVID-19

Two members of the project created a video for the Tuam area on the importance of social distancing, and other significant information. They continued to put the latest COVID-19 information on the Facebook page, with routinely posting on social media.

The project continued to support the schools with staff helping secondary school pupils with their homeschooling and in some cases with accessing IT equipment.

102 resource packs containing, colouring books, cards, pencils, sweets etc. were delivered to young people through the STAR project. The feedback was good, the young people were very pleased to get the packs and happy that the STAR project had thought of them.

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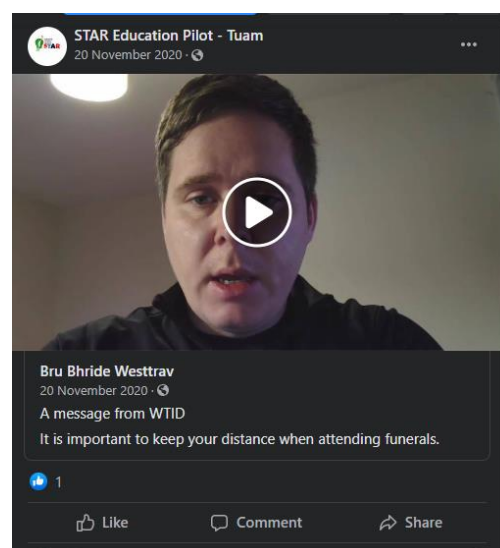
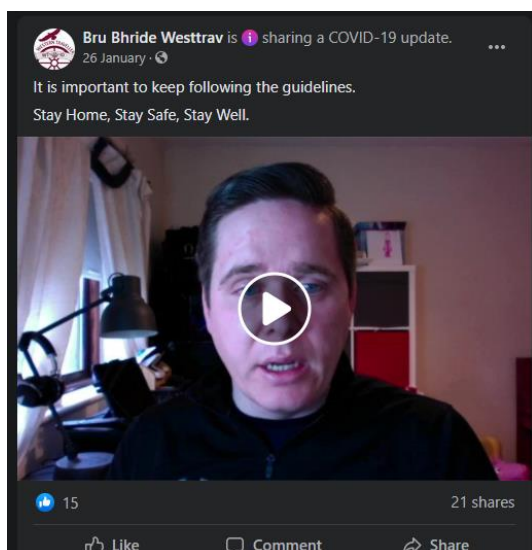
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The team continued liaising with GRD and linking in with other groups and parents. The STAR project is continuing with their weekly teleconferences.



Archbishop McHale College Tuam

Congratulations to Joe Sweeney 5th year and Karl Ward LCA who were both presented with The Exchange House Ireland National Educational Achievement Award in recognition of the hard work and commitment shown by these students in reaching their educational goals.



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Tuam Community Childcare Centre



The service is community based and is currently owned and managed by WTID. The Management Committee of WTID is responsible for the overall operation of the childcare service, ensuring that the service operates in a manner that is compliant with statutory regulations and with the ethos of the childcare service and WTID.

Tuam Community Childcare Centre is dedicated to provide an enriching and challenging educational environment, where each child is encouraged to grow to his or her fullest potential academically, socially and emotionally. We strive to provide a welcoming, calm and caring environment where children are able to play and learn at their own pace, making discoveries and choices for themselves along the way. Our ultimate aim is to provide a childcare programme, which promotes optimal development for each child, supports parents, upholds best practices of early childhood care and education and promote collaborations that help all children realise their potential.

To achieve this WTID works in partnership with parents, staff and children, by providing a secure learning environment, which enable children to be happy, confident and independent and to have positive and productive experiences during their time with the service.

Description of Service

The service is located in Parkmore Estate, Tuam, and caters for children between the ages of 1year to 15 years. The service operates from Monday to Friday from 9a.m. to 6.30 p.m. daily.

The service is affiliated to the Galway City and County Childcare Committee, is a member of Early Childhood Ireland and is also notified to the Health Service Executive and inspected by them. The service follows the principles of Siolta and Aistear.

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Support services include the Early Intervention Team, Speech & Language Therapist, Psychologist, Public Health Nurse, Family Support Workers and the Pre-School Liaison worker. I would also work closely with the Presentation Primary School and the Mercy Primary School in meeting with their Home School Liaison Teachers regarding enrolling children who are eligible to attend primary schools.

Facilities:

- Purpose built Childcare Centre.
- Open 5 days a week.
- ECCE Scheme – 38 weeks.
- CCS Scheme – 46 weeks.
- Secure entrance.
- Outdoor play areas with hard and soft surfaces.
- Full-time/part-time/sessional service.
- Spacious rooms.
- Fully equipped Pre-school rooms.
- Afterschool care.
- Bus collection and drop off service for children attending both morning and afternoon programmes.
- Own Allotments and access to Tuam Community Allotments.

Objectives:

- To provide a safe, secure, stimulating environment, which can embrace all children and values their race, language, gender, age, disability, culture, class and religion.
- To value all children as individuals and appreciate their uniqueness.
- To value parents and carers as the primary educators of the child.
- To ensure that all staff receives appropriate training and maintain high levels of practice.
- To develop practice that values the wider community as a means of adding to the richness of programmes.

Mission statement

Tuam Community Childcare Centre is committed to valuing and respecting all children in the service. The mission being to provide a safe, child-centered environment that promotes the development of each child. Tuam Community Childcare Centre working with parents and the local community ensuring quality, affordable childcare in response to the needs of the parents in the community.

Afterschool's Programme

The Afterschool's Programme caters for children between the ages of 5 years to 15 years. The service operates from Monday to Friday, from 1.40 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. A pickup service from all primary schools in Tuam town is provided on a daily basis with a drop home service between 5.15pm and 6.30pm.

The service provides supervised homework and planned activities to encourage and develop self-esteem, sociability, friendship and co-operation with others.

Various programs take place both within and outside of the center on a weekly basis with all afterschool children. We ensure that children are continuously trying out new activities such as soccer, gymnastics, Bar Monkey, baking, cooking and art.

COVID-19

The childcare manager created a WhatsApp group, to let the staff know what is happening. The childcare workers supported parents with homework given out by the schools, this was done by ringing the parents and asking if they needed help.

Videos of activities were posted on the childcare Facebook page along with educational workshops.

Childcare workers used some of this time for continuous professional development and other professional activities. A number of staff completed a SNA course.



The childcare service was successful in their application for Department of Children & Youth Affairs COVID-19 Capital Grant 2020. This capital grant was utilized to create sheltered outdoor areas within the service to create an outdoor classroom spaces. Combining fresh air with education during a health crisis is not a new concept— open-air schoolrooms were present throughout Europe and America amid pandemics in the early 20th century. Originally, these classrooms were built around the idea that good ventilation, as well as outdoor exposure, would help prevent the spread of TB. Now in 2020, the importance of ventilation, fresh air, and the classroom in a pandemic is once again being considered.

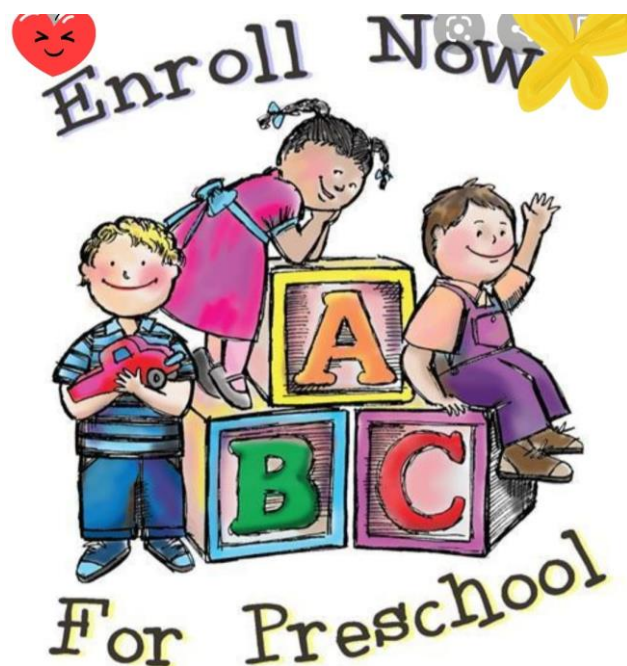
There is still much to discover about Covid-19, but one thing we do know is that it does not seem to like the outdoors. On the other hand, activities involving the “forceful expulsion” of air, like singing, loud excessive talking, and high-energy fitness routines have been associated with outbreaks.



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The childcare service was also successful in their application under the Department of Children & Youth Affairs Reopening Support Payment Grant 2020 and Pobal COVID-19 Sustainability Support Fund both of which supported the service in ensuring safety measures and protocols were put in place throughout to reopen the doors to the community when permitted to do so.



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Agency Collaboration

Western Traveller perceive collaboration as a key component of Community Development and this approach was one of the main approaches taken in the work of the organisation during such a difficult year. “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much”.

Throughout the year Western Traveller ensured there was an up-to-date list of local organisations that support work with Travellers and the project. Western Traveller continued to work with relevant agencies throughout this time. Such agencies as:

- Health Service Executive (HSE)
- Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB)
- Galway Rural Development Company Ltd (GRD)
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA)
- TUSLA (Child and Family Agency)
- Youthreach
- Dept. of Social Protection
- Galway City & Childcare Committee
- Galway County Council
- Public Participation Network (PPN)

Representation was made at other agency teleconferences:

- Traveller Health Unit
- Tusla
- Galway Co Council and Family Support Network,
- GRD
- Local Schools
- County Childcare.

Throughout the year Western Traveller engaged with Traveller families who were homeless, experienced addiction issues, living in overcrowded conditions and or living on poorly serviced halting sites and deal with issues with the relevant services such as Galway County Council.

Worked with the Galway County Council on behalf of Families who had no access/ shared access to water, sanitation or electricity.

Work with families on the Halting Site and the Galway County Council to ensure safe clean hot running water to enable regular hand-washing was available.

Supported families that experienced over-crowding and lack of space to self-isolate in their homes. Western Traveller brought these issues to the relevant services.

Western Traveller's Primary Health Care programme worked with the Traveller Mental Health Co-Ordinator in order to develop a response to the potential trauma caused if members of the Traveller community passed away as a result of the COVID-19 coronavirus and/or die from unrelated COVID-19 issues due to the usual traditional funeral practice being limited by the COVID 19 Public Health restrictions.

Western Traveller worked in collaboration with the COVID-19 Galway Council Community Response Forum if a vulnerable member of the community, those living alone or cocooning required access to or deliveries of groceries, medicine and fuels i.e., collecting medication, food shopping, social support and contact.

Collaboration with Public Health was a major part of the year for Western Traveller to ensure COVID-19 outbreaks in the within the Traveller Community were dealt with in a controlled manner, providing supports and keeping individuals informed.



Our Funders

We would like to thank all our funders and volunteers with out whom this project would not be as successful as it is.

Main Funders

HSE



government supporting communities



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council



Galway Childcare Committee
Coiste Cúram Leanaí na Gaillimhe



**An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige**
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

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Organisations & Clubs based in our premises

Citizen Information Services	Tuesday – Friday	11am – 4pm
Seetec Employment Services	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday	9am – 5pm
Narcotics Anonymous	Monday and Friday	8pm – 9pm
Alcoholics Anonymous	Mon/Wed/Fri	1pm – 2pm
Al-Anon	Thursday	7:30pm – 9:30pm
Gamblers Anonymous	Wednesday	8pm – 9pm
Being Well Group	Monday – Saturday Sunday	9:15pm – 10:30pm 6pm – 7pm
Tuam Boxing Club (Runs from Oct – May)	Mon/Wed/Fri Sunday	7pm -9pm 12 noon – 3pm
Gibbons Farrell Spellman Academy Irish Dance (Harmony Hall)	Wednesday	5pm – 8:30pm
Guitar & music lessons (Harmony Hall) (School term times)	Monday – Friday	4pm – 7pm
I.C.A. (September – June)	Tuesday	7pm – 9pm



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