

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



FAMILY LIFE SERVICES

Cúram Clainne CLG
www.thefamilycentre.com

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Foreword

As Chairperson, it is my pleasure to welcome the 2021 Annual Report which outlines the work of Family Life Services. In our annual report we seek to give a sense of the range of services that we provide. These personal and community services promote good quality relationships, well-being, lifelong learning, positive mental health, and support during distressing life events, never more needed than during the Covid 19 pandemic. We are based in Mayo, and we welcome people within the county and throughout the region.

Our services are provided through the co-operation of voluntary and statutory bodies and through the combined and dedicated efforts of staff and volunteers. The voluntary Board of Trustees oversees the work of the service and I pay tribute to the commitment of all the staff, volunteers, and board members. The board would like to acknowledge the help and support of Archbishop Michael Neary and to wish him well in his retirement. We warmly welcome Archbishop Francis Duffy to the Archdiocese of Tuam and look forward to meeting him soon. The board also extends sincere thanks to the priests and people of the Archdiocese of Tuam, Health Service Executive, Tusla Child and Family Agency, Mental Health Division HSE, Healthy Ireland, Castlebar Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and a host of other donors including individuals and organisations.

2021 has been another remarkably busy and challenging year for clients, staff, volunteers, and the Board of Family Life Services as we continued to deal with the constraints imposed by Covid 19. Despite the uncertainty and the ever-changing landscape in 2021, a total **2,082** people used the services provided directly by the Family Centre, this is an amazing achievement.

Undoubtedly, all of the services provided by Family Life Services make an enormous contribution to the health and wellbeing of many clients and their families. None more so than the counselling service which provided **3,077** hours both online and in the centre. Added to that there is Flourish Social Prescribing, The Mayo Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service, Bereavement Support, and The Rainbows Programme – a well thought out range of services that all compliment each other and supports a person in a wholistic way.

This level of work is outstanding considering the number of staff. The service has 7.2 WTE paid positions carried out by thirteen staff with only two full-time. On behalf of the board, I heartily congratulate all staff for these achievements.

One of the impacts of Covid 19 meant that some of our “regular” funding streams were no longer available, causing income for the centre to fall considerably. It is an ongoing challenge to find regular, secure funding streams to allow the work to happen. We are grateful for all the grants we receive but there is a lot of work in completing annual applications, quarterly reports, reviews etc. Fundraising is part of our work and an on-going struggle

is top priority for the Board of Trustees.

In relation to Governance, I am delighted to record that we are now deemed fully compliant with the CRA Governance Code. This will be noted on the CRA website and is very important for us for the future. Having achieved compliance, we are open to an audit and review. On behalf of our board, I would especially like to thank our Director, Máire Ni Dhomhnaill for her leadership and diligence in developing and updating policies and procedures to comply with the CRA Governance Code. Our Strategic direction is in keeping with our founding Mission and Objectives. Currently our new Strategic Plan 2022- 2025 is being compiled and will be presented at our April board meeting.

In 2021, two outstanding board members, Anne Leonard, and Mary Ryan resigned from the board after 15.5 years each of dedicated service. Anne and Mary brought a wealth of expertise, vision, insight, and sterling support to the board. I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to them on behalf of the board. I welcome our new 2021 Board member, Noreen Coyne and look forward to working with her in the years ahead.

Finally, I would like to renew my thanks to the board and to all the volunteers, staff and funders who help us to deliver quality services. We pledge to continue our commitment to make a real difference in the lives of many individuals and families whom we are privileged to serve.

Helen Fahy
Chairperson

Executive Summary: Annual Report 2021

- A total of **433** people attended the Family Centre Counselling service during 2021
- **323** of these were new referrals, and **24** were couples.
- A total of **2,812** of sessions delivered by the counselling service exclusively. was delivered to our clients who attended counselling. At the end of 2021 we have ten counsellors working on the team. Two of the team are fulltime paid staff, five are part time paid staff and two are part time volunteer counsellors who are fully accredited. One was a psychology student on placement. We provided **114** hours of individual supervision through our two supervisors and one supervisor in training plus **11** hours of peer supervision for all counselling staff.
- A total of **3,077** hours delivered by the counselling service exclusively.
- A total of **3,272** total hours of face-to-face work across all professional services
- **79%** of counselling clients who completed our Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (CORE) showed measurable reliable improvement in their overall wellbeing because of their involvement with our services.
- Services such as the MSBLS often respond to a request for service on the same day while our general counselling service has an average waiting time of **13** days for their initial appointment and an average further wait of **4–8 weeks** thereafter to commence counselling proper. Some clients presenting in acute distress at the Centre are seen on the same day they present.
- The Mental Health Division HSE fund two part time project worker posts, one is The Mayo Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service (MSBLS), and the other is for the Flourish Social Prescribing Service. Both workers are employed for 3 days each week. The MSBLS focuses on providing support to individuals and families who have experienced the death of somebody close to them through suicide. The MSBLS supported **32** individuals and **7** families throughout 2021 as a follow- up to **43** referrals. This service also supported **2** organisations and supported **10** people.
- **Flourish** which operates in the Castlebar, and Claremorris Primary Care areas of Mayo provided an individual – one to one session to **68** people. A range of social prescribing group programmes reached a total of **1,250** individuals approximately. An additional **20** people attended outreach community sessions and events. This work was achieved through delivering **194** hours face to face facilitation.
- Our general bereavement teams based in five locations across the region provided individual bereavement support to **29** clients in Castlebar & Tuam/Headford in 2021. A total of **91** hours.
- Our Bereavement & Loss Supports which includes Support Groups, Ecumenical Prayer Service supported **60** individuals in 2021
- **1,486** people attended courses in the centre under the headings of Personal Development, Family and Parenting, Bereavement and Loss, Faith and Spirituality and Professional Training and Flourish.
- We had a financial surplus of **€69,122** in 2021, in comparison to **€4,555** in 2020. The organisation remains very financially secure.
- Total numbers of people using services provided directly by the Family Centre is **2,082**.

The Organisation & Management Structure 2021

Family Life Services was first established in 1995 by the Catholic Archdiocese of Tuam in association with the Health Services Executive-West and the then Dept. of Social & Family Affairs. In 2004 it was incorporated under the Company's Acts as and is now known as Cúram Clainne Company, Limited by Guarantee. We maintained the trading name as Family Life Services. The company registration number is 369163. We are a "not for profit" organisation. In 2004 the company was also granted status as a registered charity CHY 15845. We are also registered with the Charities Regulatory Authority and our CRA number is 20055721.

Mission Statement:

Family Life Services is committed to:

- Enabling and empowering families and individuals to develop their own resources for more creative and effective living.
- Assisting communities to support family life.

Objectives:

- Provide support for families and individuals through counselling, education and training.
- Care for those in crisis.

- Work in collaboration with other statutory / voluntary agencies in needs identification and service innovation that will advance family welfare.
- Develop support services/programmes on an outreach basis.

Quality Statement:

Family Life Services is committed to ensuring that our clients and customers experience our services to be of high standard and excellent quality.

Trustees:

The following are the current Trustees of the company: Helen Fahy Chairperson. Nessa Cox, Company Secretary. Fr. Chris Brennan, Fr. Conal Eustace, Noreen Coyne, Michael Kelly.

Company Auditor:

Sheila Baynes, MCP Accountants, Chartered Accountants & Statutory Audit Firm, Breaffy Rd, Castlebar, Co. Mayo.

Current Staffing of Cúram Clainne Company Limited by Guarantee

Director of Services:

Máire Ní Dhomhnaill

In addition, we have approximately 40 other volunteers helping us to provide various services:

Counselling Team:

Full-Time: Michael Burke, Clinical Director (H.S.E.),

Máire Ní Dhomhnaill

Part-Time: Fiona Thomas, Katie O'Malley, Paula

Sheridan, Cathal Kearney. Teresa Burns

Board of Trustees:

Helen Fahy, Chairperson. Nessa Cox, Company

Secretary. Michael Kelly, Treasurer, Fr. Conal

Eustace, Fr. Chris Brennan, Noreen Coyne.

(Resignations from the Board in 2021 are Anne

Leonard & Mary Ryan)

Accredited Volunteer Counsellors:

Loretta Bracken, Eileen O Dea.

Rainbows Team 2021:

Sandra Mc Hale, Paula Kelly, Michelle Reeves,

Carol Mc Ging, Mairead Keady, Teresa O'Brien

Mannion, Aoife Gannon, Mairead Horkan, Angela

Blendell, Caroline Healy, Catriona Mullahey, Claire

Hickey, Conor Mc Manus, Josephine Poland, Lucy

Love, Laura Gallagher, Mairead Staunton, Marie

Mulchrone, Rose Donovan, Tracey Mc Neela, John

Heskin.

NUIG Student Placements:

Sinéad Kearns

Project / Link Workers:

Maura Horkan, Lisa Marren

Administration Staff:

Ann Browne, Eileen O Shea, Sinéad Donoghue,

Finola Lyons.

Bereavement Teams:

Sandra Mc Hale, Caitriona Doyle, Josephine Poland,

Maura Walshe, Ken Lyons, Brendan Mullaney,

Maureen Cusack, Teresa Fahey, Josephine O'Haire,

Rose Donovan, Kathleen O'Boyle, Brid Clesham,

Teresa Burns (Retired in 2021 Sr. Mary Corr.)

Community Employment scheme employees

associated with our Services at the end of 2021. :

Mary Mc Donagh (retired Sept 21) Pat Keavney,

Michael Walsh, Finola Lyons and Michael Neary

(joined December 21)

Director of Services Report 2021

The challenges continued as we began 2021 in lockdown which was very disappointing to all. We adapted quickly and most of the team worked from home. Everything we did, was framed by the most current and updated government guidelines that constantly changed and required a response. This time the admin staff covered the front office which was an immense help as we had many queries about all services. The roll-out of the vaccine programme was welcomed and it gradually changed everything. We returned to the centre but some of our rooms were out of commission due to their size, so we responded by limiting the number of people in the centre each day. We agreed on various actions / responses every week so that all staff and volunteers felt connected, supported, equipped, confident, and safe to continue working online and face to face.

We offered our core services including Counselling, The Mayo Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service. Flourish Social Prescribing Service and Bereavement Support. We made many efforts to run the Rainbows Programme and education and training courses but unfortunately the restrictions impacted each time. Here is a flavour of the work for 2021

Governance

In October 2021, we made our first declaration to the Charity Regulator, and this resulted in Family Life Services being fully compliant. The work did not finish there as this is a live document and all policies and procedures must be reviewed on an on-going basis. As per our own internal procedures, all policies must be reviewed by the internal policy & procedure committee before being presented to the board for approval. This is time consuming and is a slow process, but this is important work and being fully compliant is something that will benefit us in the future. As we produce the manual it demands a system behind it to make sure we have captured all the review dates, actions, person responsible, new record sheets etc. To create a manual, we had to get all policies formatted and put into sections, numbered, and dated, this work has been possible due to the patience and skills of Sinéad Donoghue. As a live document we will have a copy online which will be easy to update and accessible and available to all. In 2022 the focus will be on providing training regarding all the policies to the board, staff, and volunteers, to ensure everyone is familiar and understands the content of the policies relating to them & their work.

Mary Hennigan who has guided and helped us at times through this process will facilitate the training. As part of the overall policies, we decided to get all the HR policies through an app that staff can download onto their phone and have that information at their fingertips. We used a local company called "People Matters" to develop this for us. All staff now have their app downloaded and will sign off on reading the policies, which will be updated as required.

Fundraising

In 2021 we still had to concentrate on getting some extra funds. I continued to complete many funding applications and was grateful to receive some grants throughout the year. We decided to hold a different fundraising event this year. We created an "impact card" which is a card with three statements highlighting the number of people we supported between 2018 - 2020 which was **6,156** and other statistical facts about our outputs as a service, information that is not always in the public domain. On the other side, it highlighted how people could donate plus all our contact details. We used An Post to drop this card to all the addresses in Zone 1 which covered Castlebar, Kiltimagh, Charlestown and surrounding areas. The Campaign titled 'Family Centre in Action' was an experiment and we took a chance on it, we did not raise massive funds, we did not lose money, but it was a successful PR campaign.

Many people supported us throughout the year by running fundraising events on our behalf - our thanks to the Achill and Foxford families, Swinford AC, St. Louis CS Kiltimagh who organised fundraising events. They raised a combined total of €17,660. Míle buíochas to the organisers and their supporters, those who called in and those who posted or donated through the iDonate button on our website. I hope people who support us realise the difference it makes to those we support across our services. Go meadaí Dia bhur stór.

Services

We continued services right through the year and this annual report highlights this work in individual reports. Please take the time to read the individual contributions. The availability and roll-out of the vaccines brought hope of getting us all back to the centre. The year was not without disruptions as the various restrictions changed our way of working on an on-going basis e.g., reducing the number of staff in the building. This meant some team members worked from home on certain days, which resulted in them not meeting colleagues in person for many months.

In July, we organised a staff / volunteer day and went "off-site" to the Cill Aodáin Hotel, Kiltimagh. We used the morning to re-connect and discuss the impact of covid on us. We looked at what we needed to do in the centre based on what we had learnt during the previous eighteen months. After lunch we used the time for training.

We were able to meet most clients face to face as the year progressed and continued to support those that remained online as was their preference. Towards the end of 2021 we began facilitating a selected number of smaller groups in the building following all guidelines with great care for courses, training, and support groups.

We printed a "slimmed down" version of our education and training programmes. Once again, our own team and some of the external facilitators/presenters came on board to offer a range of courses. A few courses did not

run due to small numbers while others attracted a large number of participants. A terrific addition to being online was the completion of a “studio” in the centre thanks to a grant from the Comic Relief Fund. We purchased a large TV screen, a camera, speakers etc. It meant that we could run meetings and courses with participants in the room and others online. This is a great asset, and we hope to use it well, but it is also there for other organisations or community groups. I would like to thank Martin O Reilly who researched, sourced and set-up all the equipment for this studio. He also did some training with all the team. He did an excellent job.

To finish, I want to mention and acknowledge the people who helped throughout the year and made it all possible. To all our funders and those who gave so generously throughout the year. The Board of Trustees for their ongoing support, encouragement, and genuine interest in the Family Centre. I would like to add my voice to what Helen has said about Anne Leonard and Mary Ryan, their dedication and diligence was to be admired and always participated at the meetings with profound respect, care and for the good of the Family Centre. Mo mhíle buíochas to Helen Fahy, our current Chairperson, who has steered the ship with commitment and care and who has been a great support to me during the year. I also welcome our new trustee Noreen Coyne and wish her well on our board.

Considering how to thank the amazing staff and volunteers of the centre is an impossible task. Once again, they gave above and beyond to make 2021 a great year for the centre. I thank them, volunteers, housekeeping team, admin staff, counsellors and social prescribing link workers.

All our volunteers deserve recognition for their time and commitment to their role in the centre. I particularly want to mention the Bereavement Team who responded to an increase in demand.

The housekeeping team who had the responsibility for the cleanliness and upkeep of the centre every morning and evening. They did and continue to do an amazing job. I want to wish Mary Mc Donagh good health and happiness in her retirement. She finished with us in September and stayed with us in a voluntary capacity until a replacement was appointed. I welcome Michael Neary who joined us in December.

The Admin Team are Ann, Eileen, Sinéad and Finola who are four amazing women, always available and ready to do whatever asked of them. A more accommodating and professional group would be difficult to find. Eileen O'Shea has a dual role as she is the Accounts Manager. She has done trojan work again this year in relation to our finances. I thank her and I am forever indebted to her for her skills, competency, and good humour. Our finances are safe, and she is exceptional in her role.

Thanks to the counselling and Flourish teams for being so responsible, caring and giving to the centre and the clients they support. They tirelessly go above and beyond in your daily work. A special word of appreciation for

Michael Burke who is the best colleague one could have.

I look forward to 2022 with hope that we can continue to remain on the road to returning to a new “normality” and get more people and life back into the centre. How I look forward to us all having a social gathering and hopefully that will happen next year.
Mo mhíle buíochas dhíbh uilig.

Máire Ní Dhomhnaill
Director.

Counselling Report for the Year Ended December 2021

Service Overview 2021:

The impact of the COVID 19 pandemic continued to be unrelenting throughout 2021. Nonetheless, the Family Centre and the Counselling Services proved robust and resilient, and an excellent level of service was delivered over the course of the last 12 months. It is notable however that in the last three months of the year the waiting times for an initial appointment and to commence counselling began to be extended somewhat.

Our priorities have continued to be ensuring a safe working environment for our staff and to continue to be available to our clients in as accessible and as safe a fashion as possible. The roll out of the vaccines was of enormous assistance in facilitating the service to continue to deliver a high level of face-to-face counselling. Some 33% of client work was delivered remotely, mainly on zoom or by phone, during the year. Despite the propensity of the virus, we managed to have very little lost time due to Covid related absence, a tribute to the commitment of the team who have continued to show great flexibility in their approach to the work.

In response to a request from Davitt College we also extended our service during the year to provide counselling to a small number of students whom the College identified as in need of therapeutic support. We have in the past had a good working relationship with the College. In addition to this we received a very generous donation from the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Castlebar in 2021. This fund was specifically for support of young people aged 23 years and under and we offered 200 + sessions. The growing demand for counselling and therapy support to minors and their families is evident from enquires to the service. This is a bigger issue than the existing resources and remit of the Family Centre Counselling services. My priority has been to ensure that we deliver a quality service working within our expertise and within the limits of our resources.

Counselling Service Delivery for 2021:

Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (CORE)

CORE continues to provide a most useful source of quantitative and qualitative data on the service. The information below is drawn from both the AACPI and the CORE systems. It should be noted that due to the enforced move to working remotely for many clients, we were less able to consistently complete the CORE measures as a routine part of our work. Where appropriate I have referred to CORE data for the total history of our client work on the system which I feel gives the clearest and most accurate account of the work.

Statistical Information:

Client Profiles:

- 323 Total number of new clients.
- 433 Total number of counselling clients.
- 24 Number of New Couples referred.
- 7 number of cases waiting at the start of the year
- 7 clients waiting for an intake appointment at the end of the year.
- 53 clients already assessed at intake but waiting to be

called for ongoing counselling work at the end of the year.

- 3272 total hours of face-to-face client work across all professional services.
- 2812 total number of sessions.
- 3037 total hours delivered by the counselling service exclusively.
- 6 New cases with Child Protection concerns were seen while a total of 8 active cases were identified as having child protection concerns, 6 of which were already known to the Social Work Services while 2 the subject of referral to Tusla.
- 709 Counselling sessions were devoted principally to Bereavement counselling work (this includes the work of MSBLS).
- 114 hours of individual supervision & 11 hours of Peer Supervision.

Client Profiles of those who attended in 2020.

- 69% were Female while 31% were Male.
- 92% Irish; 3% British; 3% Other European; 2% Non-European
- 29% Full time employment
- 11% Part-time employment
- 11% Homemaker
- 12% Unemployed
- 8% Students
- 8% Disability
- 7% Retired
- 15% Not known or data incomplete.
- 5% (approx.) were 18 years or under
- 96% Resident in Mayo

Waiting Times:

The Average wait for initial appointment was 12 days. This is a very significant achievement given that the service had to make significant adaptations to adjust to providing our work primarily online or remotely. We continue to maintain a very short waiting time from assessment to first appointment which was on average within 2 weeks for 2020.

Our ambition has been to commence therapy within 4-8 weeks of assessment. Exceeding this target was partly achieved due to a modest decline in new referrals. We continue to prioritise early access based on assessed need, particularly where early intervention is likely to be of benefit to families with young children. At the start of the year 27 clients were waiting for allocation having already been seen for Initial Assessment. This compares to 9 clients awaiting allocation at the start of 2021. While only one client was awaiting an initial assessment at the end of 2020.

Client Profiles:

Of those who attended in 2021:

- 69% were Female while 29% were Male 2% undeclared.
- 89% Irish; 3% British; 4% Other European; 4% Non-European
- 31% Full time employment
- 7% part-time employment

- 12% Homeworker
- 14% Unemployed
- 11% Students
- 6% Disability
- 10% Retired
- 9% Not known or data incomplete
- 9%(approx.) were 18 years or under
- 97% Resident in Mayo

Waiting Times

The Average wait for initial appointment was 13 days. We can be proud of our level of responsiveness to requests for counselling. It has been our ambition to try to offer an initial appointment within 2-3 weeks and by in large we achieve this. Where people are going to continue counselling, we try to ensure the waiting time is between 4-8 weeks. As stated earlier this waiting time began to extend toward the end of the year and some clients were waiting over the 8 weeks. We continue to prioritise early access based on assessed need, particularly where early intervention is likely to be of benefit to families with young children. At the start of 2021 27 clients were waiting for an initial appointment. While 35 clients were awaiting the start of counselling having already been seen for intake. By the end of 2021, a further 7 clients were awaiting their initial appointment.

Sources of Referral

Key referral sources include the following.

- 66% Self Referred (this figure includes those referred informally by other services)
- 12% GP Referred (most GP referrals are informal with GP's encouraging people to contact themselves)
- 2% Tusla
- 5% Family or Friend
- 3% HSE
- 12% Other

Main Presenting Issues:

The primary reasons for seeking counselling included the following

- Marital/Relationship Difficulties 36%
- Stress/ Anxiety 35%
- Bereavement / Loss 27%
- Mood Problems 17%
- Self-Esteem 5%
- Abuse issues 3%
- Covid Related issues 3%
- Domestic Violence 2%

The above total percentages exceed 100% as some clients may be listed for more than one presenting issue.

Assessment Outcomes:

- 65% of clients scored above the clinical cut off point on Core
- 94% of clients were accepted for therapy on assessment
- 3% were referred elsewhere

Client Attendance:

- 89% of appointments were attended

Average Number of Sessions:

- per Episode of counselling 9.5%

Clinical and Reliable Improvement:

79% of clients on Core who completed both Outcome Measures **achieved clinical and reliable improvement**, this compares with the UK average of 70%. While 20% of clients made no statistically significant change and 1% deteriorated during therapy comparing with an UK average of 3%.

Unplanned endings ran at 11% on average compared with 19% for the UK.

General Observations.

New referrals increased for the year up from 299 last year to 323 this year, still below the average prior to the pandemic. Toward the end of 2021 there was increasing pressure on waiting times generally. A noticeable increase in requests to return to counselling from past clients of the service was also notable and this needs to be managed carefully so as not to be a drain on resources being available to first time clients.

In Conclusion:

The Pandemic continued to be a significant disruptive factor on service delivery throughout 2021. However, we can be proud of having minimised the disruption and managing to continue to deliver responsive and accessible counselling and psychotherapy services to the people of Mayo. It is a tribute to the whole team of the Centre, and it only through their tremendous commitment, flexibility, and adaptability throughout the year that we have been able to do this.

The impact of the pandemic will be researched and reflected upon over the coming years. There is much to be learned and despite the devastation of so many lives there are a lot of positives to be drawn from our response to the crisis which bode well for the future of the service.

Michael Burke
Clinical Director.

Mayo Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service Report 2021

Introduction

Suicide continues to be such a tragedy in our community and it causes immense grief and trauma to individuals, families and communities. As the Mayo Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service (MSBLS) moved into its eleventh year the demand on our services continued at a steady pace but with a reduced number of referrals in comparison to 2020. The lifting of Covid restrictions impacted on our work insofar as we were able to offer a six-week support group. All support work and counselling continued to be offered remotely via telephone or zoom or face to face – clients were given the choice. During the year the Liaison Worker moved to a combination of working from home and from The Family Centre which enabled face to face work to continue for the majority of clients. Our services within the Family Centre around suicide continue to include the provision of:

- Preventive work through the counselling service of the Family Centre
- The wide ranging work of the Mayo Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service detailed later in this report
- Individual and group bereavement support to those affected by suicide
- Coordination work with other groups who are involved in suicide prevention and post-vention services in the region, such as; the Western Alliance of Agencies providing Suicide Bereavement Support, the Mayo Suicide Prevention Alliance (MSPA) & Connecting for Life Suicide Prevention Steering Committee (CHO2)
- Referral of some clients for more acute care when needed
- Educational courses to the community promoting positive mental health and wellbeing as well as courses on suicide and bereavement
- An annual Ecumenical Prayer Service for those bereaved by suicide which was held in November 2021 after an absence in 2020.

Fiona Thomas, Counsellor and part-time employee of the Family Centre continues in the role of Liaison Worker for MSBLS. The project continues to be delivered on a part-time (3 days per week) basis.

The findings of the independent evaluation of MSBLS by Dublin City University in 2015 continues to encourage us to proceed with the work that we have been doing over the years. We consistently use the recommendations of that evaluation to enable us to improve and enhance this service. The following are a sample of the implementation of the recommendations;

Continuity

We continue to operate the MSBLS Mayo Model of service delivery for the suicide bereaved throughout County Mayo. It is of a high quality, relevant, accessible and tailor-

made for each referral. This service continues to thrive for a range of reasons including being part of a supportive host organisation as the Family Centre.

Working in partnership to establish post-vention services is a key and important component of this service that we constantly promote as it ensures a timely and informed response to the bereaved with appropriate and seamless follow-on.

Identity

We continue to emphasise that MSBLS is a county wide suicide bereavement service that is part of a national response initiative. It is worth noting that our service is available to everyone living in the county despite where the death by suicide has taken place.

Visibility

It is important to note the steady referral rate through word of mouth amongst families and communities who have been previously supported by MSBLS. Due to the close relationship that has been built up with the Garda Victims Support Office we are confident that we are notified of all suspected suicides that occur within the county and that our Information Pack is being given to the family of the person who has died by the investigating Garda. However, not all choose to engage with the service but they are aware it is always available to them.

The ongoing work of the Mayo Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service during 2021:

The ongoing work of the service continued at pace within the background of the “Connecting for Life – Ireland’s National Strategy to reduce Suicide”, and a changing national landscape. The National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) has funded other similar services to MSBLS throughout the country and these currently come under the umbrella Pieta. Vita House & Boyle FRC provide this service in Roscommon. The Family Centre was invited to send a representative to sit on the Connecting for Life CHO2 Steering Committee during 2019 & Máire Ní Dhomhnaill, Director of Family Life Services continues to be this person.

We are included in the Connecting for Life, Galway, Mayo and Roscommon Suicide Prevention Action Plan which was launched in December 2017 under Action 4;

- Local Action 4.3.1(b) Continue to deliver the Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service of which we are taking the lead in Mayo.
- Local Action 4.3.1(c) Investigate the feasibility of developing local peer support groups for families bereaved by suicide, building on the existing peer support network operating through the MSBLS.

The aim of MSBLS is that when a suicide occurs that the Liaison Worker (Fiona Thomas) would be available to the individual, family, or community group if they so wished,

to help them in sourcing support or actually becoming that support directly.

From January to December 2021 MSBLS received 43 referrals. The 43 referrals related to.

- 25 separate suspected suicide deaths that took place on a variety of dates and in a variety of locations
- three referrals were from people in the aftermath of a suicide attempt by a family member.

As a follow on to these 43 referrals the Liaison Worker supported 32 individual adults and seven families. The Liaison Worker also supported two organisations during 2021 and supported 10 people as a result. It is worth noting that during this time the Liaison Worker continued to give ongoing support to several pre-2021 clients.

Mayo Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service Referrals - 2021

	Families & individuals contacted	Sport Clubs/ Organisations	Individual Adults	Individual Children supported	High-risk clients	Total People supported
43 referrals	39	2 organisations (met with 10 people)	32	0	0	32 individuals 7 families 10 from groups

The 43 referrals for this period are in relation to 28 deaths in total – 17 that occurred in 2021, seven that had happened in 2020, two that occurred in 2018, two that occurred in 2017.

6 of the 2021 deaths happened in Mayo, three in Galway, three took place in Dublin, two in England and one took place in Clare, Tipperary & Drogheda.

Two of the referrals were in relation to an individual and

two families who needed support in the aftermath of the attempted suicide of a family member.

Of the 39 families/individuals who linked in with the service meetings/contacts took place in the following locations: at the Family Centre (28), over the phone or by email (10), in the home (1).

The meetings with the two organisations took place in the meeting room in The Family Centre.

Mayo Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service Meeting / Contact Venues - 2021

Home	Family Centre	Phone / Email	Work / Community / Education	Venue of Choice
1	28	10	2	0

Referral Sources: This year the referrals came from/ through; Self-referrals (20), the Garda Victims Support Office (5), Pieta (3), NEPS Educational Psychologist (1), Schools (1), GMIT Counsellor (1), Mindspace (1), People

previously supported by MSBLS or clients of Family Centre (1), Other Liaison Workers (1), Family Resource Centres (2) Workplace referrals (2), Friends (2) Family Members (2) & GP's (1).

Mayo Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service Referrers - 2021

Self Referral	Gardaí Victims Support Office	Pieta	GMIT Counsellor	School/NEPS	Mindspace
20	5	3	1	2	1
Family Resource Centres	Friends & Family Members	MSBLS & F.C. Clients	Other Liason Service	Workplace	GP's
2	4	1	1	2	1

It is encouraging to note the broad range of referrers as the service has become more established and known in the wider community. The largest number of referrers were, once again people who self-referred and the Garda Victims Support Office which is based in Swinford. There has been a significant increase in referrals from the Gardaí over the last two years and is due in part to the new National Protocol which is currently being piloted in Mayo and other areas throughout the country on the

reporting of suicide deaths. The Victims Support Service within each division is now taking responsibility for referring all families or individuals who are bereaved by suicide to the Suicide Liaison Service in their area.

The area of promoting and continuously keeping our service in the public domain continues to be an on-going challenge.

Interventions:

A whole range of needs are met through meeting individuals, families and groups. These needs include; listening to the bereaved, assessing their needs, informing them about services and supports and linking them to those as required. It may also involve answering questions about suicide bereavement, advice on how to talk with children, information on inquests, recommending books, or linking them with another person who is bereaved by suicide.

The need when meeting with groups such as friends, communities or work colleagues is to communicate good information and to have the opportunity to discuss best practice which will hopefully result in a solid, well-informed community response. These meetings require the Liaison Worker to cover both an educational and therapeutic aspect of the work.

As this work continues we have regularly noticed the welcome and the appreciation we receive and the bond that is formed at the first meeting with clients. We are also struck by the result of “just being” with people who are distressed and with those who are searching for information and guidance and are leaders in their own work or communities and have the responsibility to support others. The opportunity to provide a safe space for people to speak, to ask questions and wherein they can receive good information can make the difference between people receiving a well thought out response in a service or community or an ill-informed and potentially harmful response.

Trends:

During 2021 we received several calls from a whole range of professionals, employers and individuals in the community making inquiries and seeking advice & guidance around suicidal or self-harming behaviour. People were generally looking for the following:

- How to cope with the fact that a loved one or someone they knew had attempted to end their life
- How to deal with this situation going forward – how to be with this person and not ignore what happened.
- How to deal with the impact on themselves, a family member or family unit.

Enquiries can come from recently bereaved individuals who are living outside of the county or indeed the country, so these require the Liaison Worker to have a knowledge about services throughout the country or be able to source this information. This highlights once again how the Mayo Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service is known throughout the country. It also reflects the need to have a service which is outside mainstream statutory services and is easily accessible to all.

The Protocol:

In 2016 An Garda Síochána introduced The Mayo Divisional Victims Office (Unit) which is based in

Swinford. Each Garda division will now have a victim's support unit with a Garda Liaison Officer. This Garda works closely with the Liaison Worker relating to a suspected suicide and all referrals will come directly from him/her in the future. S/He will also be the link between the investigating Gardaí and the Liaison Worker. The information packs will be held by the Garda Liaison Officer and s/he will be responsible for distributing those to the Gardaí assigned to the case. This was initially piloted in Galway led by the Galway Divisional Victims Office based in Gort, Co. Galway. After a very positive internal review they have proposed a new protocol for referral pathways between First Responder Garda/ Garda Liaison Officers and Suicide Bereavement Liaison Services to be agreed by An Garda Síochána. MSBLS has been asked, alongside those services established throughout the country, to work with their own county victims support unit and adopt the proposed protocol and this has happened.

A further review is currently underway which will then support the work started at national level within the Garda Síochána where they are making a case to agree this protocol and write it into the Garda National Policy. Supt. Joe McKenna from Mayo is a member of this group. This will change the existing protocol and we will be able to feed in directly to the review and influence the final agreed protocol. This system has been working in Galway for the best part of three years and the feedback is very positive particularly regarding accountability and clear pathways.

Updating databases, communication & resources:

This is a core piece of the work of MSBLS and it is a vital part of enabling us to provide an informed response to individuals and families by having up to date current information on a variety of services. The need for regular communication with all the stakeholders, the public and the families is a challenge and requires innovative ways of keeping in touch with people by informing them and keeping them up to date with all developments.

In 2018 we had updated and reprinted 5,000 copies of our Information Packs & distributed them widely and we continue to have requests from across the country for them. During 2020 a national guide was put together by a sub-group of the the National Working Group for Improving Suicide Bereavement Supports in Ireland and the official launch of the HSE National Suicide Bereavement Support Guide took place online in March 2021. It is envisaged by MSBLS that this National Pack will now replace the MSBLS Information Pack. At present we furnish people bereaved by suicide with both the national and MSBLS information packs.

The guide, which was developed by a working group consisting of HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention and individuals bereaved by suicide, was attended by Mary Butler TD, Minister of State for Mental

Health and Older People with the online event featuring contributions from some members of the working group including our own Director Máire Ní Dhomhnaill.

We also have sourced an excellent publication called "Beyond the Rough Rock – Supporting a Child Bereaved through Suicide" & typically we hold a number of these books to give to clients who have children. We continuously need to look at how well we advertise on all media forums as per the recommendation within our evaluation.

The Family Advisory Group:

This group consists of members of families who have themselves experienced suicide directly. They are, as the name suggests, an advisory service to the MSBLS. The group did not formally meet during 2021. However, many of the group continue to attend the monthly suicide support meetings that are offered in the centre where they are both welcoming of and re-assuring to new members. Two members of the group also gave permission for their story to be included on our updated website as a support for other people bereaved by suicide.

One member represents bereaved families on the National Working Group who are given the task at reviewing all the supports and models currently available to the suicide bereaved, best practice etc. This working group completed their work in 2019 and completed a Report on "Improving Suicide Bereavement Supports in Ireland" with a range of recommendations.

Bereavement Support Groups:

The Family Centre offer a six weekly support group for individuals who have been bereaved through suicide and it gives participants a safe and confidential place to work through their grief. It is a 'closed' group and it is an opportunity to meet others who have had a similar experience and to look at the grief process and gain some understanding in relation to it.

In 2021 the weekly group did not run as planned in the Spring/Summer Programme due to Covid 19 and the restrictions that were in place at that time. Fortunately the group did run in the Autumn/Winter Programme and ten people joined the group, nine of whom attended all six weeks. Our monthly support group to anyone who had participated in the previous "closed" groups. The monthly group is normally scheduled to take place on the last Tuesday of every month.

Once again, due to Covid 19 we did not hold any monthly meetings this year. We have participants in the monthly group from the weekly groups going back to 2006 and a core group of 7 normally come every month. Others attend when they are struggling a little and find great support and comfort from sharing and listening to others who understand how they are feeling. We did offer the existing group the option to attend the meetings on

'Zoom' but they did not wish to avail of this option.

Both groups are co-facilitated by two counsellors – Fiona Thomas, Counsellor & Liaison Worker with MSBLS & Paula Sheridan, Counsellor.

Committee Membership:

Western Alliance of Suicide Bereavement Providers. These quarterly meetings are chaired by the Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention in the CHO2 area. . Our membership represents the Boyle Family Centre, Vita House, Roscommon, STOP Suicide, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim, Pieta Bereavement Services Galway & Sligo and ourselves. All three of the HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention attend these meetings as do the Suicide Bereavement Liaison Workers for Galway, Roscommon & Sligo. The meetings in 2021 took place remotely via Webex.

This is a most beneficial & worthwhile group to be a part of. It allows for sharing of information between agencies to ensure that people who are bereaved by suicide in the whole Connacht region are being offered a streamlined service. As is clear from the statistics of 2021 – three of the 45 referrals to MSBLS were in relation to deaths that had taken place in Galway. The Mayo SBLO also had contact with the Roscommon and Galway SBLO's during the year. Therefore, it is essential that good relationships are built up and maintained between all the agencies providing suicide support in the region.

Each time the group meets the members get an opportunity to give a short presentation on their service/work. The three resource officers for the region update the group on all national, regional and local initiatives including training & workshops which is a great resource.

Mary O'Sullivan, ROSP for Galway is currently updating the excellent guide - 'Suicide Prevention in the Community' and the group have put together a description of the SBLO role.

Mayo Suicide Prevention Alliance (MSPA) - this group was first formed in December 2009 and is made up of a wide range of organisations and groups working in the area of mental health and suicide prevention within the county. The Family Centre originally initiated the Alliance and continues to be very involved with this committee through the representation of Máire Ní Dhomhnaill.

We continue to recognise the importance of bringing groups and services together that support mental health to share ideas and to work in partnership. We have a very broad membership with a lot of expertise and well connected throughout the county. A continuing priority of this group is to highlight, promote and communicate best practice and the good work that continues across the county.

Connecting for Life Suicide Prevention Steering Committee CHO2 -the CHO2 Mayo, Galway & Roscommon Plan was launched in NUIG on December 19th 2017. In 2018 the work of these plans came back to each county where the initiatives were guided and directed through the Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention. The CHO2 Implementation Steering Group was set up to guide and support implementation ensuring the plan is successfully implemented during the next two years. The committee ran from 2018-2020 and had agreed to meet three times a year and those meetings chaired by Charlie Meehan, Head of Mental Health Services CHO2. THE Covid pandemic impacted on these meetings in 2020/2021, due to the many demands on the HSE these meetings weren't as frequent but remained in contact and moved two meetings online. Máire Ní Dhomhnaill is a member of this committee.

Suicide Bereavement Services National Working Group - this national working group was set-up as part of two actions in the Connecting for Life Strategy including examining the suicide bereavement services in Ireland plus to look at having a coordinated, evidence based, and consistent approach throughout the country. In 2019 they met on five occasions and completed a mapping of all services in Ireland. The National Suicide Research Foundation completed a literature review. This committee has 14 members and the Family Centre is represented by Máire Ní Dhomhnaill and James Ryan who is part of the Family Advisory Group represents bereaved families. This committee worked hard this year both at meetings and in between meetings. In late September the final report titled "Improving Suicide Bereavement Supports in Ireland" and recommendations was handed in to Mr. Jim Ryan, HSE Assistant National Director for Mental Health Operations and John Meehan, Head of National Office for Suicide Prevention. In December they reported back to the working group acknowledging & complimenting the work. They agreed with it in principle and will appoint a national co-ordinator as recommended. At the last meeting of this group time was taken to review the work which was all very positive. This group was focussed, goal orientated, reached all their timelines and were highly efficient.

Following the appointment of Oliver Skehan as a part-time coordinator in 2020 they set up a Suicide Bereavement Support National Advisory Group. This group has representation from HSE Mental Health, ROSP, Pieta, Family Members, and the Family Centre is represented by Máire Ní Dhomhnaill and Paula Sheridan. The purpose of this group is to support the co-ordinator in the implementation of the original report. They have a detailed implementation plan, and they prioritise the work across a range of areas. Some examples of the work of 2021 were the information guide & its launch, a range of training supports and training the trainers, support for children, a national website, coroners court. This

committee met online every six weeks through Zoom throughout the year.

In October 2021, the National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF) and Healing Untold Grief Groups (HUGG) launched the Irish Suicide Bereavement Survey. This first-of-its-kind study aims to explore the experiences and support needs of adults who have been bereaved or affected by suicide in Ireland.

The survey was open to adults in Ireland who have been bereaved by suicide (such as family and friends) as well as the wider circle of people who may have been affected by the death (such as emergency service staff, health professionals caring for the person, first responders to the death, neighbours or other members of the community who may have had contact with the person who died by suicide). It will be very interesting to see the results of this survey when they are collated later in 2022.

Ecumenical Prayer Service for those bereaved through Suicide:

We were pleased to hold our annual Ecumenical Prayer Service for those bereaved by suicide in November 2021 in the Catholic Church in Castlebar. Officiating at the service this year were Fr. Conal Eustace, PP Castlebar Parish, Rev. Maebh O' Herlihy representing the Church of Ireland, Rev. Molly Deatherage representing the Presbyterian Church and Fr. John Kneafsey from the Eastern Rite Churches.

The service includes readings, music, poetry, dance, prayer and reflection. There were approximately 50 people in attendance this year and almost the entire congregation had individually experienced death by suicide within their family, in their workplace or in their communities. We did not serve refreshments this year due to the restrictions that were in place at the time.

We continue to invite all the members of previous bereavement support groups as well as families we have worked with through the MSBLS to the prayer service. People who were members of previous bereavement groups bring others who have been affected by suicide and who may not have had previous contact with the Family Centre. This prayer service is now a central part of the annual Castlebar church calendar and for the first time the service was available to view on the Castlebar Parish webcam which enabled people from a variety of places to watch it online.

Inquest Presence:

This development by MSBLS that was piloted in 2019 did not continue during 2021 as inquests are now taking place in Swinford and at irregular intervals which makes it very difficult to work around. MSBLS may re-visit this at some future point. It has also been reviewed at a National Level so it will be interesting to see if it is rolled out on a National basis.

Training:

Due to Covid 19 restrictions the Liaison Worker was not able to offer the 'Supporting people bereaved through suicide in the Community' during 2021 and due to the emotive content it is not recommended that this presentation is offered online. It is a two-hour presentation to a community (sports club/workplace/school etc.) in the aftermath of a suspected suicide death. The aim of the presentation is to provide attendees with;

1. An understanding of the grieving process
2. Knowledge on how to support individuals, families & communities bereaved through suicide
3. Knowledge of available help/supports and how to access these.

In March 2021 the SBLO attended an excellent online workshop provided by the Irish Hospice Foundation called 'Prolonged Grief Disorder Complicated Grief'. This training was paid for by Siobhán McBrearty, ROSP through the Western Alliance of Suicide Bereavement Providers.

Website update:

MSBLS along with the other services within Family Life Services continues to contribute to the update of the website which includes video footage.

Conclusion:

The National Suicide Working Group have set up a National Steering Group & they want to have one model of service being provided nationally – a uniform, consistent service across the board. We do not yet know

what the implications for MSBLS will be going forward. Therefore, we continue to be involved in a lot of different areas around the tragedy of suicide and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. We are always trying to improve what we do so that people who need our service, and a service in the region, will receive a high standard of service delivery that is well coordinated between agencies. We especially want to thank the HSE Mental Health Division for their continued funding of the MSBLS and their ongoing encouragement, support and confidence in our services. We would also like to acknowledge the on-going support National Office for Suicide Prevention and Siobhán Mc Brearty, Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention.

Fiona Thomas.

Counsellor & Liaison Worker with MSBLS.

General Bereavement Support Report 2021

Grief from the death of somebody close to us can be extremely difficult and painful and yet it is also a normal human response. With the support of family and friends most people can manage to negotiate this difficult time without the need for any professional support. However, some people can find talking with a trained bereavement support worker helpful when they may feel stuck in their grief or when they may be worried whether their reaction is outside the norm. Family Life Services provide five Diocesan bereavement support teams across the region in Castlebar, Claremorris, Westport, Tuam and Headford. We have 13 volunteers on the Bereavement Team who all have been with us since 2008 and a few with us since the 1990's. They are all volunteers who give of their time freely after an extensive period of training.

The Covid pandemic did not impact too much on this service in some areas, but the change noted was people were seeking face to face appointments and wanted support for longer periods of time. In 2021 the areas of Castlebar, Tuam & Headford were very busy with 24 referrals in Castlebar and 5 in Headford & Tuam. Even though the other areas were not getting referrals some bereavement support workers travelled to Castlebar and

Headford to meet with the bereaved. In total this service provided **91** hours of support. I want to thank them as they are so committed, accommodating and generous with their time. We continue to advertise the service regularly and distribute our brochures and posters across the region. Because of the number of support workers that we have we can be very responsive to requests from people seeking to access the service and can normally offer an appointment within a few days of the request.

We provided some training during the year which most of the volunteers attended in person. This training was requested in 2019, agreed for 2020 but was postponed due to the pandemic. It was great that Lisa O Hara travelled west and facilitated a day's training looking at the "newer theories" of grief. It was a very interactive day, and the participants shared their knowledge, expertise and learning over the years. The feedback was very positive especially around the opportunity to have a discussion with many contributions and question but also to listen to the wisdom of others. It is planned to follow this up with another day's training in 2022.

Flourish Social Prescribing Services Report 2021

1. Background:

The **Flourish Social Prescribing Service** is one of the services based in The Family Centre, Castlebar. It offers adults at risk of social isolation a free and confidential in-depth support service to link with people, social activities and hobbies that may enhance their health and wellbeing. The link worker works with the person towards changing unhelpful behaviours or patterns associated with their social withdrawal.

Flourish is a service which is broadly based on social prescribing principles that we have developed to provide a unique brief intervention holistic model we call *"The Flourish Model Connecting with Life"*. Our overall aim is to enable all adults, especially those who may be socially disconnected within their communities, to reconnect with others in an easy and accessible way.

Originally set up in Erris in 2012, funded by National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) and named the Hope Project. In 2014 this service moved to Castlebar and became known as Flourish. In 2020, we received funding for a 2-day post from the Healthy Ireland Fund and offered a one-day service in Claremorris. Over the years, this service was evaluated, reviewed, and had input in the development of social prescribing in Ireland.

In November 2021, The Family Centre were successful in their bid to deliver a Social Prescribing service based in Ballina which covers the Belmullet/Erris and Achill areas. This is a full-time post and is funded by the Sláintecare Healthy Communities initiative. The new service will be called Flourish North & West Mayo and will be based in the Moy Valley Resources offices in Ballina (Office space no.3) from Monday, 14th February 2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented Flourish with one of its greatest challenges to date. Flourish responded by working within all current government guidelines and restrictions and found a way to be able to stay connected to people and to continue to offer a relevant service in this challenging time. This was achieved by offering several of its core programmes online and developed some new programmes to stay current and relevant in this time, as we realised the importance of staying connected more than ever during this difficult time of lockdowns and disconnection.

The nature of social prescribing is about linking clients with social activities and during the covid-19 period these were non-existent in most communities, apart from online links. The Flourish service initially faced several immediate challenges including how best to stay connected with existing clients and how to encourage new clients to connect with activities online and where possible within their communities. This proved initially difficult as there were less referrals to the service, coupled with the issue of there being no activities available to link

participants to. Sessions were initially offered by phone or online followed by face to face once restrictions allowed this.

The project/link workers continued in 2021 to redesign the Flourish Service as well as the programmes to make them suitable to offer online. This has proved to be a great success and is currently a very effective addition to what Flourish can offer. Clients have reported feeling very well looked after during this time as contact was maintained with high numbers attending.

The aims of the Flourish service for 2021 were:

- To continue to develop the individual client and group work and respond to emerging client's needs. In Flourish we do this by offering our model known as "The Flourish Model - Connecting with life" and tailor making interventions to suit the target group.
- To maintain connection and relationships with referrers and encourage new referrals e.g., GP's, Primary Care Teams, Mental Health Teams, Local Community Organisations.
- To promote Flourish in the local community and media.
- To link and network with local organisations involved in targeting individuals who are at risk or already are socially isolated and need a specialised intervention to connect them in with people and their community and local activities.
- To attend local meetings, offer professional training on social prescribing and supporting relevant local initiatives.
- To maintain links with other social prescribing projects nationally, the Social Prescribing network and the Social Prescribing peer network and any new developments that are relevant to contribute to.

Flourish 2021:

Flourish offered a menu of group programmes to all adults but especially targeted at those who found themselves socially isolated or lacking in social confidence. This social isolation can be as result of social anxiety, stress, life changes, health issues, or mild mental health issues. The Flourish model support clients to meet other people, practice their social skills, build up social and self-confidence. It enables them to link with new social activities and make changes to reintegrate socially again in a natural and planned way.

Flourish received 68 referrals to the service, there were 194 one to one/phone/virtual sessions. 13% were male, 87 % were female. We had 1,182 participants across the group programmes – 36% were male and 64% were female.

Flourish continued to offer individuals a specialised support service to reintegrate socially by meeting people and developing interests & hobbies. The Flourish model offered a wraparound service to adults in Mayo.

Flourish 2021	No of Clients	Male	Female	No of Hours
Client Work 2021:				
A. Individual one to one sessions (75 referrals)	68	9	59	194
B. Flourish Group Programmes				
• Discover Your Interests Autumn	14	3	11	14
• Online Mindful Monday's sessions (1048 attended)	*733	270	513	37
• Flourish Music circle (441)	308	153	154	24
• Flourish Programmes: 3 Flourish Refresher courses 2 Get Creative with Flourish Get Fit with Flourish Breathe Easy with Flourish Revive and Thrive Connecting/Reconnecting (Social inclusion week)	33 19 9 6 13 6	0 1 0 0 1 1	33 18 9 6 12 5	7 12 6 4 8 2
• Professional CPD events & presentations	20	5	15	3
• Ceol agus Comhlúadar	14	6	8	1
Total Groups only (1182)	1250	449 36%	794 64%	312
*This figure shows total numbers recorded who attend these sessions which includes some duplication as some clients attended Mindful Mondays and the music circle regularly. This duplication has been removed in the figures				

Participants were supported to practice and build their social and self-confidence skills to be able to reengage with their communities. Flourish achieved this by offering one to one sessions (68 people availed of these) and a few Flourish group programmes (1182 people availed of these) Examples of the group programmes included Discover your Interests, Mindful Mondays, Refresher Sessions, Fortnightly Music Circle. The project/link workers also facilitated some outreach social prescribing events and talks for relevant groups in the community and linked with community events and organisations.

The benefits of moving on-line allowed us to be able to offer the Flourish service to a wider geographical area and we have had some people join our programmes from other counties and countries.

Currently, the project/link worker based in Claremorris works out of Cúram Family Centre on a Monday. She is working towards establishing and promoting the service throughout Claremorris, working with the local primary care teams along with other services and organisations within the town. A group programme was run for four weeks in September 2021, collaborating with Mayo Mental Health Association called "Revive and Thrive". This increased referral numbers and supported with the establishment of the outreach service in Claremorris.

The Development of Flourish North & West Mayo Social Prescribing Service.

In 2021, The HSE Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme in collaboration with representatives from across the HSE and the Community and Voluntary sector developed a framework for how social prescribing can be mainstreamed and integrated across the Health Service at

Community Healthcare Network level. This framework was completed and launched in July. Also in 2021, Healthy Communities was rolled out across Ireland which is a new cross-government initiative to deliver increased health and wellbeing services to 19 community areas across Ireland.

The Healthy Community site in Mayo is based across a catchment area of Belmullet/Erris, Achill, and surrounding areas. Social Prescribing is one of these health and wellbeing services, and in September 2021 the Family Centre were successful in their bid to deliver this service. This involves a full-time position to deliver the social prescribing service. In November 2021, interviews were held for the position and Lisa Marren was successful in her interview. Flourish North & West Mayo is the name that has been developed for this service. Lisa works with Máire alongside Paul Gillen (Healthy Communities Coordinator, CHO2) and Laurence Gaughan (Health and Wellbeing project manager) on this programme. There is a Sláintecare Implementation Group meeting monthly which is attended by all agencies connected with the Healthy Communities programme. It is planned that in 2022 there will be an official launch of Healthy Communities. Flourish North & West Mayo is currently working to roll out the service in the Belmullet/Erris, Achill and surrounding areas and the office is based in Ballina.

Client Work - One to One Sessions:

The project/link workers continued in the one-to-one sessions to offer 68 clients a supportive place to explore how linking with interests and hobbies could enhance their lives. Together with the participants, we continued to examine how they are personally contributing to any

patterns of social withdrawal and to plan to make any changes to address these difficulties. Participants were facilitated to link with activities in the community and where appropriate, to participate in Flourish programmes. The project workers remained in touch with participants by the Flourish email service. Appropriate referrals to other support services were made if they were needed, for example, the Family Centre Counselling Service, and a range of HSE and community services, supports and courses.

Discover your Interests:



This specialised group programme is designed to support adults to meet others, acknowledge patterns of social withdrawal, and begin new social activities in their community and learn wellbeing tools for daily living. This programme can vary and be adapted to suit what is needed at the time and one programme was offered in Autumn to 14 participants over 7 weeks delivered by two facilitators.

Refresher events:

The Flourish service held three refresher sessions during 2021 as a way of checking in and staying in touch with existing and past clients. Some of the programmes were called "Have a Chat with Flourish" They were held online and one in the outdoors. 33 Flourish participants attended these events and connected with each other, sharing new ideas and information on local activities. They also received a wellbeing session to recap on previous learnt skills.

Mindful Mondays:

In 2021, we continued our successful drop-in Mindfulness practice session available to anyone in the community. This development originally came as result of a Flourish participant saying they would like to have a drop-in



regular session to practice wellbeing skills together in the community as often it was a struggle to maintain the mindfulness skills at home. The overall aim is to cultivate our ability to be content in the present moment and practice wellbeing skills. Participants have reported an extra benefit was that it offered an easy way for them to gather in the comfort of their own home and was free of charge.

The John Hoban Music Circle:

The music circle is a supportive community space offered to develop individual's skills in singing, playing music, poetry, writing or any such expression. The music circle has been running since 2014 and is facilitated by two musicians John and Isabella Hoban, two very gifted and skilled musicians and singers. John and Isabella also have a strong interest and skill in building up confidence in each person and in showing how connection with music can help our mental health. The sessions aim to support adults to make a lifelong connection with music and song and poetry.

It is a unique space as each participant is invited to without any pressure to share a song or poem or play something or to simply listen. Participants report that it challenges them to develop their confidence to share by performing a solo piece that they have been preparing over two weeks.

During the year 308 individuals have attended a total of 24 sessions, a combination of face-to-face group at the Tennis Club in Castlebar, plus an online option using zoom. This offers a choice to many people. Many positive outcomes have been reported by participants including increased social and self-confidence, a supportive group to be actively part of, to attend fortnightly who share their own interest of music, and a relaxing environment to unwind in.

Ceol agus Comhluadar

As an extension of the music circle, John, and Isabela Hoban together with Flourish have developed the idea of Ceol agus Comhluadar. This is a pilot project, funded by The Family Centre to offer the music circle to nursing homes and sheltered housing throughout Mayo. This is provided online, via Zoom. John and Isabela come into the Family Centre and use the new studio equipment to connect with the residents. Participants are invited to connect with each other, to share a song or a story, or to enjoy the music. This is a way to connect those who are residents in the various settings as well as enjoying the music. One session was run before Christmas in 2021 with 14 participants joining with the remaining 4 sessions to be run in early 2022.

Get creative with Flourish & the Linenhall

This online programme run in conjunction with the Linenhall Arts Centre was offered twice in 2021 to 19 people. Participants got to sample a range of creative activities to give them a taste of the activity so they could then decide to pursue that if it was of interest to them.



They sampled Music and Song, Creative Writing, Pause for a Poem, and Movement and Dance.

Get Fit with Flourish

Get Fit with Flourish was a new programme which involved taster sessions of gentle exercise classes. This was a 4-week virtual programme and involved taster sessions of gentle Zumba, yoga, creative movement “5 rhythms



dance” and finished off with a virtual tour of a gym and a gentle exercise class.

Revive & Thrive

Revive & Thrive was a 4-week joint initiative between Flourish and the Mayo Mental Health Association. This was a 4-week exploration of how to build a toolkit on how to maintain the participants wellbeing as we emerged from a lockdown. The 4 weeks covered the following topics:

- 1) negative thinking patterns,
- 2) values and self-care,
- 3) resilience
- 4) how to set goals.

This course was run face to face in Curám Family Centre, Claremorris.

Breathe Easy

In November 2021, Flourish funded a 4 week “Breathe Easy” programme which was delivered by Claire Blake, Heartspace Ireland. This course introduced participants to simple breathing exercises to use in their daily life to improve wellbeing and encourage self-care.

CPD Flourish Social Prescribing Events

We completed two sessions of a CPD presentation to professionals. This presentation had two main parts to it – the first part explored social prescribing and the concept of it. The second part was about Flourish, how Flourish fits in with the social prescribing concept and how we can support referrals from the professionals attending. This presentation was attended by 20 professionals. The professionals were from a range of different sectors including occupational therapists, physiotherapists, Clinical psychologist, Social work, Mental Health Teams, Further Education Centres, Addiction Counsellors, Psychotherapists, County Council Teams, Family Resource Centres and third sector organisations such as Ability West, Irish Wheelchair Association and Mayo Traveller Support.

Flourish Email Service:

The project/link workers circulated a list of any local events, new courses etc. by email to clients with their permission and typically received a few emails per week. Clients have reported that this has meant they no longer feel disconnected from what’s going on in their community and for some even if they were not able to take part, they felt included and enjoyed having the option to choose to participate. It has been of great assistance to other local organisations to get their courses and programmes promoted to a targeted audience. Other professionals and stakeholders also join the Flourish mailing list and report it keeps them in the loop of all that is happening on a weekly basis. Clients have reported feeling very grateful during the covid crisis to receive many helpful supports, tools and activities using this email service.

Individual extra supports:

The project /link worker continues to attend an activity with a client for the initial visit if that extra support is needed or to offer home visits where transport is an issue.

This has been a great extra support to clients who may not have otherwise engaged with the project. Our finding is that most clients know they don't need to avail of it when the time comes but having the option was a support.

National Networking & Training:

The project/link workers are members of the social prescribing peer network and are part of the planning group to organise this structure and meetings. They would have contacts and been in touch with other social prescribers nationally during 2021. They also attend any relevant seminars and any HSE initiatives or launches that are relevant to the service and social prescribing in general. One of the project workers was involved with the development of a national training programme for new social prescribing link workers in Ireland. This was an initiative by the HSE and Sláintecare and involved working with a health promotion officer, HSE training lead and three other social prescribing link workers based in various parts of Ireland. The essential skills training programme will be rolled out and offered to all social prescribing link workers in Ireland in 2022.

Other support services

The project/link workers made appropriate referrals to other therapeutic/ supportive services where the need arose, for example, the Family Centre Counselling Service, and a range of HSE & Community services, Mayo

Recovery College, HSE Self Care to Wellness programme e.g., Educational Training Board, Development companies. This remains an excellent pathway for both clients and the service we refer to.

Relax and Stay Well CD:

The CD which was produced by the Hope Project in 2013 in response to clients' requests to be able to practice the new self-care skills they were learning at home. It is also available on the Family Centre Website www.thefamilycentre.com

Promotion:

The project/link workers availed of opportunities to promote the Flourish Service and positive wellbeing messages with the local media especially local radio and print media e.g. Notices (free of charge) advertising the project in general and any courses were published in each of the local papers or on social media when there was a course on offer - There are a number of short videos now available to view on the Family Centre website www.thefamilycentre.com

Supervision:

The project/link workers attend regular supervision sessions.

Maura Horkan / Lisa Marren

(Project/Link Workers)

Spiritual Support and Enrichment Report 2021

The services of the Family Centre are open to all members of our Community irrespective of their Faith or Spiritual beliefs. We recognize that the search for meaning in life is a universal human search. It is well recognised that most Faith and Spiritual beliefs can help people negotiate life's difficulties more readily and contribute to their resilience. Our Spiritual Support and Enrichment programme seeks to respond to this expressed need of those who wish to nurture their spiritual growth. We hold a deep respect for everyone's spiritual journey not just through our specific Spiritual programme but also through our services such as Counselling and Bereavement Support.

Most of our current spiritual programme focuses on the provision of Centering Prayer opportunities for those who would like to avail of such. Centering Prayer is a form of Christian meditative / contemplative prayer developed in the very early Christian Church of the 3rd and 4th centuries. Centering Prayer is an adaptation of this early form of meditational prayer to fit more seamlessly into our everyday modern lives. It seeks to promote stillness and silence to increase our openness to the presence and action of God in our lives. This form of silent prayer is also a universal form of prayer that is Ecumenical across many different Faith beliefs. Our typical Centering Prayer meetings involve engaging with the silent prayer form under the standard guidelines taught through the programme and this is normally followed up with a

relevant teaching and discussion. Much of the teaching is provided through DVD recordings and writings from the vast legacy left by Fr. Thomas Keating, Trappist Monk (1923-2018). Fr. Thomas was the main person who updated this form of prayer / meditation.

2021 has proven to be challenging for all our community because of the pandemic. The consequent restrictions have prevented us from providing the level of service in our spiritual support programmes as we would have ideally wished. However, throughout the year we have been blessed that our Centering Prayer facilitator, Niamh Brennan, has been generous in facilitating on-line Centering Prayer meetings every second week almost continually throughout the year. This is a tremendous support to those who wish to connect with the groups we provide. An average of 14 people attended the groups each month. We are hopeful that the pandemic restrictions will ease during 2022 and that we will be able to provide face to face meetings in the Family Centre building. The online format also offers a flexibility of access to those who may have transport difficulties and, like so many services, it may be a "hybrid" model of provision into the future. We wish to sincerely thank Niamh Brennan and all the participants at our programme throughout the year.

Cathal Kearney

The Family Centre's Digital Journey in 2021

The Family Centre has continued to expand digitally, and the team has continued to upskill further within the past few years. We have significantly grown, and we have developed our IT systems which in return has allowed us to become more interactive with different areas of Mayo and Connaught that we would not have been able to access previously without these systems in place.

The Family Centres platforms have become a go-to for those looking for information on what is happening within the centre, courses, workshops or to even simply see a note on staying positive or a gentle reminder to enjoy life. I have done this by creating posters and images to share on a weekly basis. Our following on the different social media platforms have also grown and this is reflected with the number of followers growing to Facebook with 1,862 followers and Instagram is at 487 followers. We continue to use Eventbrite to promote courses which also has a payment facility which allows people to make bookings. This in return has meant people from as far as Australia, Canada, America, Europe etc have booked places on some of our courses and this has allowed our centre to go global with our support services.

During the pandemic, we looked at how we connected with the clients of the centre and reviewed how we could continue that support for each client. Our counselling team began to use Outlook digital diaries throughout the year, this system has created a much smoother operation and ability to track each appointment, meetings etc. This was done through each team member accessing and scheduling their diaries on Outlook in return allowing the admin team the ability to view, edit and create appointments. This has strengthened our communication as a team and for our clients.

As we come out of the Pandemic, we continue to offer the service of Zoom to allow clients to access our services in a much more efficient manner. We also host and attend meetings through Zoom which has proven to be invaluable. In the past attending a meeting out of the centre would have incurred a cost for travel and taken valuable time but now through accessing Zoom we can channel our energy in a more productive manner.

We now update the website in house which was our goal for 2021. I completed training which allows me to maintain and update the website, this in return maximises the potential of the website as a tool to support and promote the centre.

Through Máire's vision for the centre and securing funding Studio 5 has been created and launched. This is a studio where meetings, courses, workshops, music groups etc can all meet and be broadcasted or record themselves through various platforms. There is a 50-inch

television, a laptop, a camera that can be controlled by remote control and speaker pods that allow for interaction between those in the room and online and has already enhanced our services in the Family Centre.

It is a very exciting time for the centre as every year we continue to grow, upskill, and improve our services through our IT technology, knowledge, and ability to move forward with the times. As we become more competent and confident in various areas, we offer people a variety of courses and services online that may have been difficult to access for many reasons e.g., location, public transport, health, or financial reasons. With all these tools and knowledge constantly evolving I think you could agree that the future for The Family Centre is a bright one.

Sinéad Donoghue
Digital Marketing Co-ordinator

The Rainbows Programme Report 2021

Rainbows" is a peer support programme for young people who have suffered a significant loss through death of parents, grandparents, family member or through separation and/or divorce of their parents. The Rainbows Programme has been offered in the Family Centre since its doors opened in the early 1990's. The provision of the Rainbows programme to children can be an invaluable support to both the children and their families. It is only made possible through the dedication of trained Rainbow facilitators who give of their time in facilitating the small peer support groups. Because there is a relatively small number of Rainbow sites in the county children often come considerable distances to attend our programme in the Family Centre in Castlebar.

We are now in the fifth year since the new nine-week programme was introduced and the feedback from children, facilitators and parents/guardians is very positive. As each year passes some small changes are made which improve the service for children and their parents/guardians. This programme is supported by the most up to date research and best practice with a solid set of policies & procedures and overall governance. The demand has increased in the last two years, and this is evident in the number of queries we receive all year round.

In 2021 we made several efforts to run the programme but due to the disruptive year we had with re-openings and lockdowns we just could not manage it. The restrictions reduced our capacity for the number of groups as some of the rooms are too small. As the year went on the waiting list was getting longer and we had 60 - 70 referrals waiting in late 2021. I decided to meet with the facilitators through zoom to discuss people's availability etc. As always, I was blown away with their commitment and determination to run the programme. In December we picked dates for the new year, decided on the groups, and contacted them all, so we would be ready to go if the restrictions were lifted.

Earlier in the year, when the waiting list was getting longer, I contacted Anne Staunton of Rainbows Ireland. I put a proposal to her that I would work with her to put something together for the parents whose children required the services. I believed if we supported the parents, they in turn could support their children. We developed this idea and offered it to the parents connected with the Family Centre first, it was a great success. Anne presented on the grieving process for children and their understanding at different stages of development. We gave the participants time to chat and I chaired the feedback and a little bit on "self-care". We had 10 participants for the first night and 7 on the second night. Anne went on to train other coordinators and they co-presented many of these meetings throughout the country. The feedback was the need/ opportunity for the parents to meet when

the children are attending the programme, in other words parents may need support too.

Another development this year came as a request from families bereaved by suicide and whether the child/ children could attend the Rainbows Programme. It has been the policy of Rainbows Ireland not to have these children in a general bereavement group. Anne Staunton asked Máire to work with her on a proposal which was presented to NOSP in summer 2021. This initiative is being supported by the National Office of Suicide Prevention and the plan is to pilot it in several areas e.g., rural v urban, community v school programmes etc. during 2022. It will also be evaluated through the NSRF with the hope of changing the policy of Rainbows Ireland and open the programme to all bereaved children. This will require the development of a new training module for the facilitators so that they have the confidence and ease with the subject in delivering the programme. The Family Centre will be one of the pilot sites.

The demand of the Rainbows Programme impacts on the Centre as parents and guardians are looking for a lot of information before committing to the nine weeks. As the Administrator for Rainbows while on site the Director currently informs the parents/guardians about the programme and its policies & procedures, requirements etc. The coordinators' role is to liaise with the parents and set-up the groups have all the resources needed at hand, signing in & out sheets etc. This is neither possible nor practical as we need to give an informed response in a timely manner. All our facilitators are working and have busy lives and cannot be available as demand requires to respond to queries. I must acknowledge the enormous contribution of Finola Lyons who took this on, contacted all the people on the lists and got commitment for January 2022. She put hours into organizing and getting a definite reply from parents/guardians.

I would like to acknowledge the support from Rainbows Ireland through Anne Staunton and her team. We are truly blessed to have such a group of volunteers, a total of 21, some have great experience, some are new, but to have this number means that we can consider running the programme twice a year or more if needed in 2022. They are so giving of their time, eager, committed, and keen to support the children. I so admire them for their generosity and care, and I thank them. They remained in touch right throughout the year and are still waiting to start the programme. Again, thanks to Finola Lyons who did the groundwork. We look forward to hearing the voices of children in the centre in 2022

Máire Ní Dhomhnaill
Director

Family Life Services Statistics 2021

Services	Numbers Attending	Educational Courses	Numbers Attending
Counselling	433	Personal Development	1120
Free Legal Advice	0	Family / Parenting	230
**Bereavement Care	29	Faith & Spirituality	44
Rainbows Online Support for Parents - Zoom	17	Bereavement and Loss	60
Spiritual Enrichment	0	Professional Training Courses - working with newer theories on grief.	12
Flourish One to one sessions	68		
MSBLS Services	49	Outreach Social Prescribing Talks & Presentations. CPD event with Flourish	20
Total	596		1486

Total number of people using services provided directly by the Family Centre for 2021 was 2,082

Total number of people accessing the **Bereavement Service was **29**, Castlebar (24), Tuam & Headford (5), Claremorris (0), Westport (0)

Course Statistics

NAME OF COURSE	NUMBERS ATTENDED	HOURS
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Personal Development:

Spring 2021

Mindful Mondays	461	23
Music Circle	203	12
Get Fit with Flourish	9	6
Get Creative with Flourish (Feb.)	11	6
Get Creative with Flourish (April)	8	6
Possibility Programme – Harmonious Living	6	8
Have a Chat with Flourish (March)	23	4
Have a Chat with Flourish (Outdoors June)	4	1
Older & Bolder	20	4
Counteract Covid Chaos	5	3

Autumn 2021

Assertiveness Communications	6	12
Mindful Mondays	272	14
Discover Your Interests	14	14
Revive & Thrive	13	8
Refresher Meet up with Flourish	6	2
Music Circle	15	105
Breath Easy	6	4
Connecting & Reconnecting	6	2
Enneagram Part 1	18	10
Ceol agus Comhlúadar	14	1

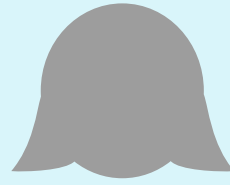
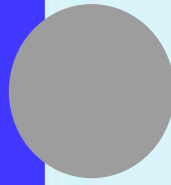
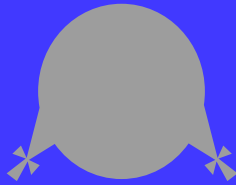
TOTAL ATTENDING	1,120	245
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NAME OF COURSE	NUMBERS ATTENDED	HOURS
<u>Family & Parenting</u>		
Spring 2021		
Common Sense Parenting	5	12
Understanding & Supporting a Child with Anxieties (Feb.)	59	2
Understanding & Supporting a Child with Anxieties (May)	70	2
Autumn 2021		
Common Sense Parenting	7	12
Understanding & Supporting a Child with Anxieties (October)	32	2
Understanding & Supporting a Child with Anxieties (November)	18	2
Engaging Young People around the issues of Alcohol, Drugs & Addictive Behaviour	26	2
Helping My Child with Dyspraxia	13	1
TOTAL ATTENDING	230	35

NAME OF COURSE	NUMBERS ATTENDED	HOURS
<u>Bereavement & Loss</u>		
Spring 2021		
Weekly Suicide Bereavement Support Group	10	12
Ecumenical Service for Those Bereaved by Suicide	50	2
TOTAL ATTENDING	60	14

NAME OF COURSE	NUMBERS ATTENDED	HOURS
<u>Faith & Spirituality</u>		
Spring 2021		
Continuing Series of Centering Prayer	22	15
Autumn 2021		
Continuing Series of Centering Prayer	22	15
TOTAL ATTENDING	44	30

NAME OF COURSE	NUMBERS ATTENDED	HOURS
<u>Professional Training</u>		
	Spring 2021	
Professionals Social Prescribing Event With Flourish	15	1
	Autumn 2021	
Working with Newer Theories on Grief In the Therapeutic Space	12	6
Ballinrobe Social Prescribing Service CPD With Flourish	5	2
TOTAL ATTENDING	32	9



THE FAMILY CENTRE CASTLEBAR

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