

doras buí
a parents alone resource centre

2007 ANNUAL REPORT

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1. INTRODUCTION

2007 was a year of consolidation for Doras Bui. Although two staff members resigned and new staff were recruited, the numbers of lone parents using our services and participating in the broad range of programmes provided in the Centre continued to rise.

A significant amount of staff time was spent networking with local groups on the Department's plans for cohesion and this process was very positive. Also, the Director of Doras Bui was elected to the Board of the Northside Partnership by its community members. While this role has created extra work, it is an important arena to raise the issues facing lone parents, to build alliances for the acceptance of family diversity as well as offering Doras Bui the opportunity to work with local players to ensure that the process leads to an improvement in the way of working together for the betterment of the whole community.

The Centre participated in the consultation process on the future of the community development support programme and made submission as well as attending local and regional meetings. In preparing for the discussion of the future of the CDSP by both staff and Board of Management the recommendations contained in the 'Developmental Welfare State' were studied. The general view of the Centre is that while it offers interesting suggestions regarding the role of local community organisations in the delivery of services, a significant dialogue between the relevant government departments and statutory agencies on the one hand and participating local organisations on the other, regarding the principles and protocols which will be necessary to provide guidance and coherence for any new funding relationships.

We look forward with great interest to hearing the Department's proposal on the future of the programme

2. BACKGROUND TO DORAS BUI

Doras Bui was founded in 1986 through funding from the EU's 2nd Programme to Combat Poverty, we were one of the first community development projects (CDP) to be funded by the (then) Department of Social Welfare.

Since then, the organisation has grown and is now one of the biggest CDP's in the country with twenty-seven full and part time staff. Through our Resource Centre and Crèche we provide a whole range of activities and programmes for one-parent families.

Collaborating with other local partnership and community development organisations on issues of common concern to those with whom we are all working is a key part of our work and has taken up much of the Director's time in 2007.

The philosophy of the Centre encourages economic independence, self-confidence and the development of skills. This has been put into practice through the provision of a drop-in information, support and guidance service, tailor-made training courses on subjects identified by lone parents as well as campaigning for policy and attitudinal change that accepts family diversity. This process has led to a self-help model of community development, which has had considerable success and is being replicated by lone parent self-help groups in disadvantaged communities throughout Ireland.

The Board of Management of the Centre consists of people who are either currently or have previous experience of parenting alone.

All our activities are provided for lone parents and their children in a spirit of solidarity and professionalism and are guided by the following principles:

- Access to accurate information;
- Self help;
- Meaningful participation;
- Influencing Government policy that is inclusive of family diversity.

¹ NESR Report 113. 2005

3. CATCHMENT AREA

The catchment area of Doras Bui has a population of 106,000, which has not changed significantly since the last census of 2002. It has a wide geographic spread with some of the country's most affluent areas (Sutton) and those experiencing very high levels of poverty and social exclusion.

Nationally, of the 29 District Electoral Divisions (DEDs) that are classified by the HAASE Index of Relative Influence as being among the most disadvantaged, 8 of them are in the catchment of Doras Bui including:

- Clontarf West B (in which Donnycarney is located)
- Kilmore C (including Kilbarrack)
- Moatview
- Darndale/Belcamp
- Bonnybrook
- Edenmore
- Kilmore B
- Harmonstown

The profile of the majority of families living in three of these areas are at the extreme end of poverty and social exclusion and form part of the RAPID Programme². A research project undertaken in 2005 for the Northside Partnership in preparation for its 'Preparing for Life' Project indicated:

- The proportion of children under 14 years of age living in these three areas is twice that of Ireland as a whole;
- 48% of all families are headed by a lone parent;
- One in three children is born into a household dependant on welfare;
- One in nine adults are unemployed;
- Only 12% of children reach third level education, less than a quarter of the national average.

² The RAPID Programme is a Government initiative, which targets 45 of the most disadvantaged areas in the country with the aim of focussing resources available through the National Development Plan.

4. POVERTY & ONE-PARENT FAMILIES

While the rate of consistent poverty dropped only one point of a percent from 7% to 6.9% between 2005 and 2006, the rate of poverty of one-parent families rose from 27.2% in 2005 to 32.5% in 2006 and now they are four and a half times more likely than anyone else to live in poverty³.

The experience of Doras Bui concurs with these statistics; lone parents using the centre who rely **exclusively** on social welfare as their only source of income remain socially isolated, in debt and experiencing high levels of stress often leading to overuse of prescription drugs.

5. ORGANISATIONAL MISSION

Doras Buí is community development resource centre that provides high quality supports and services to one-parent families living in the greater Coolock area of Dublin. We aim to support lone parents to extend their life choices; overcome discrimination and isolation, and become socially and economically independent.

6. DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community Development aims to encourage people to take control of their lives, to fully develop their human potential and to promote community empowerment. It involves people coming together in-groups to identify their collective needs and to develop programmes to meet their needs.

³ The EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions, 2006 published by the CSO.

7. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- To bring lone parents together in the catchment area of the Centre and support them in jointly identifying their own needs and tackling their own problems;
- To research and highlight policy needs and issues of one-parent families; To seek to educate state agencies and the local community about the rights and needs of one parent families;
- To promote the development, co ordination and integration of services and facilities for one-parent families;
- To continue the development of an independent resourced group of lone parents who will have the skills to manage the Resource Centre and engage in analysis and debate about the needs and issues of the changing family.

These objectives have been reviewed every three years since Doras Bui was founded and successive Boards of Management have decided that they continue to be relevant and reflective of the situation one-parent families find themselves in relation to societal attitudes towards them and the lack of public policy which recognises and supports family diversity.

8. GOVERNANCE

The role of a Board of Management in Doras Bui is one of governance. The Board of Management ensures that the organisation has a clear mission and strategy that the organisation is well managed and gives guidance to the Director on the overall allocation of resources.

The Board of Management in Doras Bui does not get involved in the detail of the operations of the Centre. It provides insight, wisdom, and good judgement to the Director and Staff.

The role of the Board of Management in Doras Bui is divided into two broad categories:

- The work of the organisation
- The work of the Board of Management itself.

Main functions of the Board of Management include:

- Developing policy and strategy;
- Performing a representation function when required;
- Providing accountability for the organisation to funders and other key organisations;
- Ensuring sound financial management and accountability;
- Providing support and advice to the Director and through her/him to the staff;
- Developing organisational policies and procedures in conjunction with the Director and through her/him the staff.

The Board of Management comprises nine people; eight women and one man, it meets every six weeks and receives detailed reports on all aspects of the operations of the Centre and receives recommendations on future actions and strategies.

A Finance Standing Committee of Board members has been formed to monitor all aspects of the organisation's finances. Three Board members including the Chairperson along with the Financial Administrator and Director meet every six weeks and oversee the previous month's spend, monitor the projected annual budget and discuss and decide on requests from the Director to purchase items or accept tenders over €1,000.00.

The centre adheres to the Guidelines for Public Procurement provided by Pobal in all its financial dealings.

In 2007, the Board of Management participated in a residential weekend workshop to review its performance and the performance of the Director. Also the Director reported to the Board on the overall performance of all staff.

9. ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT 9 MEMBERS
All members either currently parenting alone or with previous experience.

FINANCE SUB GROUP

DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR
Overall direction and strategy, HR, financial management, fundraising, Advocacy & campaigning, Relationships with statutory agencies, National Networking. Standards and Quality Control

<p>SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM Comprising Director, Finance Administrator, Head of Programmes & Creche Supervisor</p> <p>Role: Ensuring that all staff work together to maximise effectiveness of the work; Build in time & space for strategic thinking re the future of the organisation; Take responsibility for delivery of the agreed work plan.</p>	<p>FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintain accurate financial records; ○ Prepare all financial reports for the Board & funders ○ Prepare accounts for the yearly audit; ○ Maintain petty cash ○ Preparation and payment of salaries & related tasks. ○ HR Administration ○ Purchasing & monitoring of office equipment & stationery <p>2 full time staff: Finance Administrator & P.A. to the Director</p>	<p>CRECHE</p> <p>Creche Supervisor responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Creche Programme □ Purchasing, maintenance and monitoring of all materials & equipment □ Daily supervision of Creche Staff □ Collection & management of fees □ Parent contact <p>15 childcare staff full & part time</p>	<p>RESOURCE CENTRE ACTIVITIES</p> <p>Head of Programmes responsible for supervising the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Information/Advice Service; □ Group activities; □ Local networking; □ Child counselling service □ Events in the Centre □ TPSP Project <p>3 Programme staff full & part time: Project Worker, Information/Support Worker & Development Worker</p>
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10. PROGRESS ON KEY AREAS OF WORK

2,141 Lone parents and children have participated in the Centre's programmes and activities in 2007.

□ Supporting Family Life

Sixteen parents participated in the thirteen week parenting programme 'Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities. This Programme is a prevention-intervention parent-training programme for parents with children between three and eighteen years of age that addresses violence against the self (drugs/alcohol, depression/suicide), violence in the family (child abuse, domestic violence) and violence against the community (anti social behaviour, crime and gang behaviour). It is not aimed specifically at one parent families and promotes family diversity in relation to ethnic and cultural background.

The evaluation of the programme by participants was extremely positive and it will continue to be delivered across the period of the current work plan.

'I enjoyed meeting parents in the same situation as myself'

A programme on health and well-being was run throughout the year and included information on a wide range of health issues such as depression, childhood illnesses, nutrition and sexual health. Cookery classes were held with the aim of promoting the use of non processed fresh food. The programme was delivered by staff with inputs from local health professionals.

The Arts and Crafts programme included courses on pottery, painting and flower arranging and Christmas decorations were very popular in 2007.

Two personal development courses were run with the aim of supporting participants to improve their personal communication and negotiating skills and to engage in positive decision-making in relation to all aspects of their lives.

'It was good talking to others in similar situations'

The aim of the group work programme is to support lone parents to gain new skills and to build positive relationships and friendships. Free childcare is

provided by Doras Bui to encourage participation in our work programme.

'Learning how to work as a team was hard but there was something to show for it at the end'

Most of these courses were funded through a combination of VEC hours and the grant from the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform through its Equality for Women Measure, which finished in June 2007 and the evaluation report was launched in September by the Minister of State at the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform, Mr Sean Power TD.

Information and Support continues to be core part of the work of Doras Bui. In 2007, the building was renovated to provide a room at the front of the centre for our information and support work with lone parents on a one to one basis with the aim of providing more confidentiality and space for parents to bring small children with them. The provision of information leaflets from national and other providers was extended and the room is much more comfortable.

Work on the development of a new database was not completed in 2007 and it is expected that it will finished in the Spring of 2008.

The Child Counselling service funded by the Family Support Agency continued in 2007. There is a permanent waiting list and we will be seeking additional funding in 2008 to provide additional counselling hours.

Eighteen children attended for counselling sessions with one hundred and fifty seven hours counselling provided across 2007. Nine families were on the waiting throughout the year.

Access to child counselling is very limited in the catchment area of Doras Bui. Waiting lists on the few available local services are very long and the shortest waiting time is six months.

The Child Counselling Policy and procedures were reviewed and reviewed in 2007 with the aim of ensuring best practice regarding the number of

counselling hours provided to each child, contacts with parents and value for money.

In relation to the Crèche, the Stretch & Grow child fitness programme is delivered weekly to the pre-schoolers and now all staff are qualified in the High Scope Early Years Curriculum and in-service training is provided to ensure that we continue to deliver a quality service to the children in our care.

A shortage of affordable childcare places for one parent families and indeed all families on low incomes has become a permanent feature in the catchment. We have a permanent waiting list mainly for part time places, in particular for babies under one year old.

The biggest challenge in 2007 was the announcement of the new National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) which replaces the Equal Opportunity Childcare Programme (EOCP).

Initially, the two levels of subvention was encouraging families on welfare to put their children into full time childcare, something that is against the ethos of Doras Bui, while at the same time providing no subvention for families on low incomes but outside the limits for the Family Income Supplement Scheme (FIS). Following much lobbying by the community childcare sector, this has now been altered. However, as the NCIP is not being rolled out until July 2008, it remains unclear as to the effects of its implementation in relation to the costs of running the Crèche.

The Teen Parent Support Project (TPSP) is an intensive programme with the specific aim of supporting teenagers who become pregnant to stay in school and achieve the Leaving Certificate. Sixty two teen mothers, five teen fathers and four grandmothers were supported throughout 2007. The range of supports provided included childcare, assistance with the costs of education, information on a wide variety of issues such as social welfare, employment, education, legal and court accompaniment.

Staff often find themselves in a negotiating role between teen parents and their parents. This type of approach has proven to be invaluable when family issues arise as a result of overcrowding in the family home and difficulties in personal relationships.

Two separate evaluations of the first phase of the project were launched in 2007. The first one was undertaken by an independent Organisational Development Consultant and the second by University College Dublin in relation to parenting. Both very positive and a sample of comments made by participants in both reports is outlined below:

'The TPSP means for me that I can stay in college, get help with being a mum and know that they are there for me and I won't be judged'

'I could get back to school because they helped me with childcare'

'I got my social welfare sorted and realised I am not alone'

The Project is supported by a Steering Group that meets every six weeks and is composed of representatives from the following community and statutory agencies:

- Health Services Executive, Dublin North
- Northside Partnership
- Bonnybrook Youthreach
- Rotunda Maternity Hospital
- Mercy College
- School Completion Project
- Childcare Bureau
- Former Teen Parent
- Doras Bui (the employing organisation)

The role of the Steering Group is to facilitate interagency co-operation locally through information gathering and discussion with a view to improving the effectiveness of existing services for teen parents.

In 2007, the Steering Group employed an independent consultant to evaluate its effectiveness, to put in place a new protocol for the recruitment of new members and to develop a work plan for the Steering Group for the next twelve months.

A Service Level Agreement is now in place between the HSE and Doras Bui which states that the funding will be delivered in two tranches every year. Nevertheless, there are ongoing problems with the administration of the grant which continues to be three months late from time to time.

In 2007 all of the five teen mothers who studied for the Leaving Certificate were successful.



In service training in the Resource Centre and Crèche is ongoing. In 2007 both the Board of Management and staff participated in training in relation to domestic violence and drug awareness.

Substantial renovations were undertaken in the Centre in 2007. The kitchen and car park were upgraded and a new space was created for the drop in information and support work with individuals.

11. WORKING TOGETHER BETTER

Locally, the Centre is involved in a number of local initiatives as follows:-

- Northside Community Forum Steering Group
- Preparing for Life Initiative
- Speedpak
- D17 School Completion Programme
- Northside Partnership Board
- Northside Partnership CD Sub-Group
- Local CDP Cluster
- TPSP Steering Group

Nationally as follows:-

- Member of OPEN
- Community Sector Employers Forum
- Eastern Regional CDP network
- NWC

12. INFLUENCING GOVERNMENT POLICY

Doras Bui has been part of the response of lone parents' representative groups to the proposal from the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA) to reform the One Parent Family Payment.

We have participated in the consultation facilitated by the National Economic and Social Forum and have established a good working relationship with DSFA locally in relation to issues emerging in the testing of these proposals which is happening in Coolock and Kilkenny.

Access to affordable housing and accommodation continues to be one of the biggest challenges facing lone parents attending the Centre. Submissions have been made to Dublin City Council and work has been undertaken to highlight the barriers to employment for those in receipt of the Rent Supplement. Doras Bui is promoting the Rent Allowance Scheme to those lone parents who have been claiming rent supplement for more than 18 months.

13. EVALUATION

The Centre uses co-evaluation to ensure that it continues to be effective in its work with lone parents. Co-evaluation is an approach which supports staff to ask themselves good questions, to gather and review the information collected from participants involved in all the Centre's activities and to share this information to foster good decision making.

Co-evaluation is now part of the life of the Centre, in a climate of trust, both staff and participants can come together to examine whether programmes are successful or failed without fear of consequences. It provides the Board of Management with accurate information on which to its decision making particularly regarding spending on programmes.

14. OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR 2008

KEY AREA OF WORK	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN	EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR YEAR 2
Supporting Family Life	Parenting Programme will be run twice	Lone Parents attending the Centre and those using our Crèche	January to September 08	26 Lone parents will have participated in the parenting programme
As above	A D.I.Y Course	Lone Parents	Jan to Mar 08	17 parents will have undertaken parenting course
As above	Health course will be designed and delivered 3 times	Lone parents	Jan to Sept 08	38 lone parents will have participated in health programme
As above	Stretch & Grow Fitness programme will be made available to children in the Crèche	Stretch & Grow Facilitators.	Weekly across the school year	80 children in our Crèche will be fitter and healthier
As above	4 staff will undergo training on updated basis		Sept 08	4 staff will have the skills to use the database
As above	Once Off Events (i) International Women's Day (ii) Crèche Fun Day	All staff	Mar 5 08 August 08	Links with be re-established with local Traveller Women 80 children will have participated
As above	12 week Interior Design Course	Lone Parents	April to June 08	17 Lone parents will have a basic understanding of the principles of Interior Design
As above	10 week computer course	Lone Parents	April to June 08	20 Lone parents will have basic computer skills
As Above	Residential Self Development Course	Lone Parents	May 08	13 Lone parents will learn techniques of stress management and self control
As Above	Introduction to the Media	Lone Parents	Sept to Dec 08	12 Lone parents will achieve FETAC accreditation
As above	Summer Programme of family outings and a Summer Camp for children	One parent families	July/August 08	90 families will have enjoyed outings in the outdoors 30 children will have participated in a week long Summer Camp
As above	Information & Support Service will continue to be offered on a 'drop in' basis.	2 staff	Throughout 08	Numbers are hard to quantify as this service is provided on demand.
As Above	Christmas Family Outings	3 Staff	Dec 08	45 one parents families will enjoy a visit to the theatre

				to see a pantomime
As Above	Feasibility Study of the provision of Out of School Childcare in the Crèche	External Consultant	April to June 08	Results not known yet, but it is hoped to initiate this service in Sept 08
As Above	Evaluation of Childcare Practice	External Consultant	April to June 08	Staff training needs identified and an improvement in the quality of childcare practice
Promoting the work of Doras Bui	(i) 4 workshops will be delivered to Social Workers, Home School Liaison Teachers, Dublin City Council Staff and Community Welfare Officers on the work of the Centre and issues regarding family diversity	Director & Head of Programmes	Across 2008	Local public service professionals will have an increased awareness of the work of the Centre
AS above	Feature in the Northside People advertising the services offered in the Centre	Director	April 08	The Northside People is delivered to 25,000 houses in the catchment
Working Together Better	Promoting the Northside Community Forum	Director	Monthly meetings	All local CPD's will be playing a more active role in the Forum
Working Together Better	Preparing for Life Project	Head of Programmes	May 1 and Monthly meetings in 08	Project will be launched and Doras Bui will be playing a role on the Executive Committee
As Above	16 Days of Action on Violence Against Women	Local Refuge, Law Centre, Doras Bui and other local groups	Nov/Dec 08	Awareness will be heightened among the local about violence against women and services available will be promoted
As above	Community Sector Employers Forum	Director	Monthly	Governmental funding agencies will be more aware regarding the issues facing community employers
Striving for Organisational Excellence	New Caller Database purchased and working	Staff member & IT Consultant	May 08	The database will be more responsive and accurate
	New Database for Crèche for all records	As above	Mar 08	Financial and all other record keeping in the Crèche is much more efficient and accurate