

PROSPER Times



Parent Support

The Parenting Support Group was formed by four Seatown Road parents in 2009 and now has sixteen members. The group meets once every five weeks on a Monday night from 7pm to 8pm in the centre. They share their thoughts more freely with other members in this relaxed and informal environment.

So far they have run two successful workshops and are soon to hold another titled "Functional Money Training for Parents". Many of our sons/daughters have a lack of understanding re money/confusion re change/getting money from an ATM etc, hopefully this will be of help to parents.

The support group has forged new friendships between those parents involved and the staff attending the meetings; Grainne Tinney, Speech & Language Therapist, Loraine Hone, Social Worker, and Gillian Cox, Centre Manager.

All new parents are welcome to join. **For more information please contact, Grainne Tinney on 01 8839000.**

Survey Says it All

In 2006 the Prosper Fingal Parent/Family Forum was set up. It meets at a minimum three times a year and the average attendance at these meetings would be 130 individuals. This Forum gives an opportunity to the primary carers to express their views and discuss the many developments that are happening within Prosper Fingal and the disability sector in general.

The latest innovation by the Forum was to conduct a Satisfaction Survey to capture the views of parents and families on the services they receive and their relationship with Prosper Fingal. There is some suggestion within the sector that parents and carers have not the opportunity to express their views in a forthright manner. With this in mind, the survey was designed and executed by the Forum members and was totally independent of the staff and management of Prosper Fingal.

The key findings of the survey were:

- 97% of respondents rated the services they receive as being between Good and Excellent
- 92% of respondents rated the communication between Prosper Fingal and families as being between Good and Excellent
- The main concern for families was the negative impact that funding cuts are having on the level of services provided
- Families fear that new policies could potentially lead to isolation, increased dependence on families, increased vulnerability and loss of friends
- There is an increasing need for crisis and planned residential provision
- The issue of the lack of meaningful work was highlighted



Well, that's my opinion Pat!

In summary, this confidential survey, organised and reviewed by parents and family members, clearly endorsed the services of Prosper Fingal and its open and trusting communication.

Thank you to everyone who contributed.



Help and be happy

Raising Awareness

One of the choice classes offered in Seatown Rd. is that of Volunteering and the group taking part voted to raise funds for the Dublin Simon Community (DSC). An employee of DSC came out to talk about the work their staff and volunteers do. The group learned what homelessness means, why people become homeless and what services are there to help people who are homeless. One man told us how he had been homeless for years and with help from DSC he now has his own home and is working.

The class then turned their attention to fundraising. A coffee morning in Seatown Rd. raised an amazing €220 and a bag pack in Tesco Clarehall made another €237. By giving their time the group raised a total of €457 to donate to the DSC. Another in-house collection for the Irish Heart Foundation raised €97. As well as donating money, the Service Users awareness of social disadvantage was raised. They realised that not everyone has things like a home, family and friends - things we sometimes take for granted.

They also learned that it makes us feel good to be part of something and to help others. By doing volunteer work the public will learn that people with disabilities do not have to be seen as always being in need but instead are people with the energy and compassion to work for others.

"Volunteers aren't paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless."

Here we Grow

When the Skerries Allotments opened its gates in 2010 the Rush service was successful in obtaining a patch. The Allotment Group spent many long hours toiling the land to make it ready for planting. This was a huge undertaking and it took months and months of digging and weeding before the group could lay out the plot and begin making raised beds. Old tyres were sourced and stacked up and used as planters for potatoes, a seating area was created and a gravel path laid for easy access.

It was in Spring this year that the Allotment Group was ready to begin planting. First in were onions and potatoes, quickly followed by lettuce, pumpkins, carrots, berries and courgettes. The pumpkin seeds were dried out from the pumpkins carved out at last year's Halloween festivities. Going back and forward to the allotment helped the group get to know the allotment community who would regularly water the plants if the group were unable to visit. As complete beginners, there was a lot of trial and error involved – like planting the carrots too late and the black current bushes that never grew! However, the allotment has been a massive success with courgettes as big as marrows and a strong community spirit developed with the neighbours.

The group reaped its harvest this month and made some wonderful home grown vegetable hampers for people who had helped make the allotment happen. Although the plot is in the non-organic part of the allotments, no pesticides of any sort have been used. Sun and water was all that was needed to grow these tasty veg.

"We got to use some of the vegetables in our cooking class and they were really good." – Joe Howard



Best in Show

Northern Highlights

During the summer, 13 Service Users from the Portmarnock service went on a day trip to Belfast using public transport. Bus Eireann ground staff helped us to get our pink receipts which would enable us to travel on Ulster Bus using our bus passes. When the driver discovered that we were visiting the Titanic quarter he kindly offered to drive us out there at no extra cost. Imagine our surprise when we discovered that they were celebrating their 1 millionth visitor that day. Grand celebrations were taking place with live music, TV cameras, a host of dignitaries and lots of excitement. We even got cake! Everyone enjoyed the tour

of the exhibits even though there was a lot of walking to be done.

We then took a tour of Belfast City and visited Stormont Castle. After all our sight seeing and cultural experiences we headed for home. What a great day.



The 'last' céili



On the Buses

Bringing Ollie Carey for a walk when he was young often included a stop-off at the Parkgate St. Bus Garage. He Loved it! He would gaze longingly at the long lines of the then inaccessible buses from his large blue and white striped buggy. Occasionally, a bus driver would give him a role of unused tickets. At home with his sisters he would then play 'bus' supervising the line up of the kitchen chairs and dispensing the tickets. His family had to buy and convert transport for his use.



Going places

Until some weeks ago Ollie had never been on a bus! Imagine his delight when the Portmarnock staff pushed his wheelchair onto the newly adapted 102 Dublin bus to the Pavillions or even the 32 into the city centre. Ollie is now really enjoying the community integration outings on public transport and would like to thank the staff for helping to make his dream come true.

Man's Best Friend



Canine therapy

'Pet Therapy' is described by the Irish service Peata as the use of companion animals to enhance the quality of life of people in Caring Institutions by visiting and interacting with them. Pets have been shown to benefit our health and well-being and Pet Therapy used worldwide.

We have a lot of animal lovers in Piercetown and so decided to invite some Therapy Dogs to come visit us. Peata volunteer Eugene and his trained Leonberger dogs Dexter and McGyver have become regular visitors to the Piercetown centre and are a big hit with everyone. The dogs are really enormous but are fully trained and the Service Users love them. They have had the opportunity to interact with the dogs on a one-to-one and group basis.

Goal Achieved

Matthew O'Neill from the Portmarnock centre recently realised a very personal goal. He has always wanted a job or to do some work experience and, with support from his key worker and the speech and language department, he has worked very hard to make this ambition a reality.

Matthew now volunteers in the Parish centre every Wednesday where he helps the Meals-on-Wheels ladies prepare the lunches for the elderly and infirm in the community. Using visual aids to negotiate what was expected of him, he completed a successful 12 week trial. The coordinator was very happy with his work and has requested that this be a permanent arrangement. Matthew was overjoyed to hear the news and took great pleasure in telling his proud parents of his achievement.



The 'meals' man

Advice / Help

Respite Care Grant

It has recently come to the attention of the social workers that many parents/carers are still not aware of the Respite Care Grant or of their eligibility for same.

This yearly payment (usually paid in June) is currently €1,375.00 and is paid automatically to anyone in receipt of Carers allowance/Carers Benefit. However, as this grant is not means tested, other parents/carers may also be eligible.

To qualify you must be the primary carer, not be employed for more than 15 hours outside of the home and not be in receipt of an unemployment payment or signing on for unemployment credits.

If you are caring for more than one person, a grant is paid for both of them. Carers can use this grant in whatever way they wish (despite what the name implies, it does not have to be used for respite care!). If you think you may be eligible, forms can be downloaded from the internet or obtained in any Citizens Advice Centre.

If in any doubt, please contact the social work department (ph;01-8955600)

Handy Hint

Could we ask you to include a contact number for "home" and for Prosper Fingal in your family member's mobile phone.

Recently one of our Service Users had a fall and was too distressed to speak coherently to a passerby who came to her aid. The individual's phone did not have a home or Centre number in the phone contacts and so the Good Samaritan could not contact anyone for her.

Wheelchair Holidays

For anyone who has a family member in a wheelchair and who are thinking of a foreign holiday the following places have been recommended: Casa Heddy in Puerto Del Carmen, Lanzarote which caters for people with disabilities or who need special care and La Brisis, in Playa Blanca, Lanzarote which has excellent wheelchair facilities. Both can be viewed on the internet.



Don't worry - you have our vote!



Friends together



Killer weeders at work



Bridge over the Park



The 'new' Famous Five



Look out - here I come!

Out in the "Big bad world"

Living independently, in private rented accommodation, has become a reality for many of our Service Users in recent years. Brendan O'Reilly and Orla Belton from the North St. service have been sharing an apartment for a couple of years now. They both say that they feel more confident and responsible since moving out of home. They enjoy cooking their own food, having their friends over, watching what they want on TV and not having to live by their parents rules. However, they acknowledge that it is not all plain sailing and that it is far more expensive to live independently than at home with family. Paying the rent, the ESB and buying food does not come cheap.

Shane Fitzgerald and Hilary Currihan (Portmarnock service) who also share private rented accommodation, agree. "Now we are out in the 'big bad world', we don't always have money to go out after we pay our bills" says Shane. The couple also enjoy their independence and like the fact that they can come and go as they please.



Managing reality

David Sharpe (Seatown Rd) has also recently moved into a private rented flat. "I had to fill out an application form for Fingal County Council housing before I could apply for rent allowance. I was also lucky to find a nice flat at the right price, as you can't get rent allowance if the rent on a place is too expensive". David is enjoying his independence and cooking for himself. However he was quite surprised at the cost of buying groceries!

When asked "would you like to move back home?" everyone was in agreement - a resounding "NO" was the answer.

Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Bill 2013

The above Bill was released by the Government in July this year and is under discussion before it is officially signed into Irish law. It is very important that all families and carers of our Service Users know and understand how it will relate to their individual circumstances.

1. It concerns only people over 18 years
2. It is still a Bill so may be changed before it becomes law
3. This law, when enacted, will apply to everybody – not just people with a disability
4. The Bill concerns ways in which an individual who needs assistance in decision making can be helped and by whom

You can download an Explanatory Memorandum of the Bill on the website: www.oireachtas.ie or google Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Bill 2013



99 reasons to volunteer



Get well soon Ruth



Beam me up Scotty!



It's My Life!

Five Service Users from the Howth service recently attended a self-advocacy conference in Bantry entitled "Its My Life" which was hosted by Co-Action Cork. The aim of the conference was to give individuals with disabilities the opportunity to explore together what is important in their lives and to let their voices be heard on issues that are meaningful to them.

There were two presentations on the day, the first on "Living in My Own Home – If I can do it you can do it too!" This was followed by "You've got to listen to me" where several self-advocates shared their often very moving and heartfelt personal stories about their own struggle to make people listen to what they wanted in their lives.

The hosts put on a drama performance about how different your birthday can be when you decide to speak-up for yourself. Then the keynote speech was given by a young woman from Cork who was born with no arms or legs. Joanne's motto is *No Limbs, No Limits* and her talk was very interesting and very funny.

Since attending this conference the Howth service self advocates are more positive in speaking up for themselves and know that they will not 'get into trouble' for doing so. They understand that they have choices about where and with whom they live and what they spend their time doing. They are more confident too and recently visited COPE in Cork and spoke to Service Users, families and staff there about their experiences attending a community-based service.

The Sky's the Limit

Seven Service Users from the Rush service took their love of the GAA to new heights when they went on the Etihad Skyline tour at the top of Croke Park. This is the only stadium rooftop tour in the world and offers exceptional views of Dublin.

"Before we started there was a safety talk and a demonstration on how to put on our harnesses and headphones. We practiced 'walking the dog'. This is when you guide your safety harness around the safety rail and is a little like walking a dog, hence the name.

All harnessed up and with headphones on to listen to a recorded tour we began the epic trek through Croke Park's famous stands to the very top seats and towards a metal stairs that lead to the roof. It was nerve wrecking making our way up higher and higher, but as soon as we reached the walkway that circles the stadium roof, we relaxed and clipped on to the safety rail. We tentatively made our way around the roof and saw all the sites of Dublin. With every step our confidence grew. Soon everyone made their way out onto the sky bridge which is part of the walkway which loops out over the pitch. This has nothing below or around it - only air!! When you look down one side you could see the long drop down to the seats below and on the other side you could see the perfectly green pitch.

Once the tour was over, we cautiously made our way back down once more to solid ground. "



On top of the world

Leading by example

Darra Dockrell, from the training service in Seatown Road, is a Skerries man through and through. As an interested and active citizen, he has been giving back to his local community over the last number of months.

He volunteers two hours every week to take part in the 'Adopt A Patch' in his estate. It is hard work which involves "chopping away stingers and weeds to save the flowers". Darra is given different tasks and patches to look after each week by a local community worker but carries out the work himself.

The aim of the work is to improve the appearance of his local area and to do this he has to "put down flowers and prune them". Darra laughed as he admitted he had never even heard of the word 'pruning' until he started the work.

When asked if he feels the work he does is important Darra replied "if people see how much better the place is they might do some work too".

This is a really important observation as we could all be inspired by people like Darra to give a little more of our time to improve things for the people and places around us.



Dig Darra Dig



Looking Good Orla

Orla Delaney (Portmarnock centre) recently started a women's grooming class. Part of the focus of the class is care of the face. Orla enjoyed a face mask and mini facial recently after which she expressed an interest in getting her make up done professionally. She decided to incorporate this into a goal while in the community.



Top model

On her next community outing Clarins staff in Arnotts cleansed and toned her face, demonstrated for her proper application techniques and gave her some free samples. At the Chanel stand staff facilitated a free makeover. Autumn colours were used to make her look fabulous! Orla enjoyed being the centre of attention, loved her new look, and got some very handy tips. She then had a complimentary hair straightening demonstration which complimented the make up. I think you will agree that the overall look is amazing!

New Adventures



Brave girls

Service Users, Tara Casey, Fiona Loughman and Gary Goodman, paid an overnight trip to the Carlingford Adventure Centre as part of the Summer Project. This was a new experience for the Skerries service which up to this only took part in day-long activities. Once the excited trio had checked into the Centre and located their dorms, it was off to explore.

The following day the adventures began in earnest. First they took part in Laser

Tag Shooting on the mountainside using infra-red laser guns. Fiona said that "shooting the staff" was her favourite part! Next they made Fudge in the local sweet shop – a big hit with them all as they got to take home the finished goodies. Finally, a speed boat trip took them to a deserted cave and they all got the chance to steer the boat on the way home.

Wright place, Great time

The place was the Wright Venue in Swords, the time was 7:30pm. The event was the annual summer barbeque for Seatown Road but this year it came with a little more sizzle. For the first time, the Seatown Road posse were joined by the North Street crew and some former Seatown Roaders from Howth. This meant that old friends danced the night away and had a few drinks in the classy surroundings of the Wright Venue VIP area. They could chill on the terrace for a drink and a chat or just get some much needed air after burning up on the dance floor.

A good night out is always about being surrounded by good people having fun together. Everyone from Seatown Road, North Street and Howth would agree this was the case at The Wright Venue this summer.



Do you come here often?



Pride of Place

The Rush Service has been heavily involved in the community over the past year taking part in many local initiatives. Most recently, Service Users Joe Howard, Cecil Moore, Ian Butterly, Barry Farrell, John Smith and David O'Kelly volunteered at the Rush Harbour Festival.

This weekend event was organised by Rush Community Council who greatly valued the contribution of our Service Users. It was because of this strong community involvement that Sinead Smyth (staff), Cecil Moore and Suzanne Griffin were invited to represent Prosper Fingal in the Pride of Place competition for Rush.

This unique All-Ireland competition is about showing respect and inclusion for every sector in our communities. Judges come to a competing town and meet different groups and community members. Prosper's representatives met the judges in the Rush Library. Cecil Moore told them how welcome he feels in the community and how he volunteers in the local church and at various events. Suzanne Griffin talked of how the community came together to fight the cutting of the library opening hours. The judges were impressed with how Cecil and Suzanne spoke about inclusion and thanked them for taking the time to meet up. Once the formalities were over, the representatives from all parts of Rush community were invited to a celebratory dinner in Rush Golf Club.

"The judges were nice. I told them that Rush is great. I told them all the things I do in Rush." – Cecil Moore

Congratulations

We send our congratulations to three ladies who all recently passed the half century and celebrated with family and friends at separate 50th Birthday parties. They are Paula Thornton (Piercetown), Mairead Gallagher (Skerries) and Suzanne Griffin (Rush)

Congratulations to Kate Matthews (Portmarnock) who married Ciaran Dalton, Laura Creaner (Howth) who tied the knot with Alan Jones and Claire Kelly (Respite) who married Brendan Kearney.

Pauline Andrews and partner Paddy have a new baby girl (Charlotte) and Leanne Curtis and husband Paul welcomed their baby boy (Shay) rather earlier than planned.

Get Well

We send our best wishes for a speedy recovery to Ruth Murphy (Howth) and to Stephen Maguire (Portmarnock) who are both under the weather at present.

Thank You

Once again, we send our deep appreciation to Sr. Rosario Delaney (aunt of Orla in Portmarnock) for the generous donation of €500 towards our publishing costs. These funds were raised by the children of Holy Infant School in Ballwin, Missouri, USA. Thank you very much to you all.

Farewell Jackie

At the end of July, Jackie Lee retired from the Admin team in Head Office. Jackie was one of the smiling, friendly faces that greeted you in the Skerries reception for the past nine years. She had a special relationship with the Service Users in Skerries Daycare who were all very sad to see her go. She marked her retirement at a special celebration in Raff's on the Corner in Skerries along with colleagues and family. We wish her a happy and healthy retirement.

Contact Clare Murray
086-3867592 or email
claremurray@eircom.net

Dancing Success

Congratulations to the Service Users from Rush who entered the Irish Performing Arts Festival in Cork. This is a contest that celebrates the talents of people with intellectual disabilities and this was the third year that the Rush service took part. There are four different areas of competition; song, dance, drama and instrumental music. Running alongside this are street performances, workshops and parties open to the public and the participants.



Strictly went dancing

Stephen Dowdall took part in the song competition with a moving performance of "I'd wait for life" sung with a live band. Although Stephen did not win his competition, rumours abounded that it was a very close call for first place.

Kim Doyle, Seamus Reilly and David O'Kelly took part in the dance competition and gave a heartfelt contemporary performance to "Beneath you're beautiful". It had been a difficult run up to the competition for the dance group with two performers having to pull out at the last minute, costumes being left back in Dublin and lighting and sound difficulties. Despite this, the trio pulled an exceptional performance out of the bag, taking first place and the giant trophy home.

When the results were being announced the judge said that Kim, Seamus and David were so professional and showed such emotion in their routine that they were the obvious choice for 1st place. The three would like to say a special 'thank you' to staff member Sinead Smyth for all the hard work and effort she puts into the arts in the Rush service.

Well done to one and all.

My Biggest Achievement

Over the past 18 months, Mark Warrilow (North St) has lost an amazing eight and a half stone!! While Mark had no problems with his health he feared dying at a young age. He was addicted to unhealthy food but with time, great support from his key worker and plenty of will power, he has now broken the bad habits.

He has given up chips, sweets, fizzy drinks, coffee, chocolate, ice cream, cake, biscuits and fast food.



The new Mark

He now makes healthy choices when shopping, goes to the gym and has gone from 23 stone down to an amazing 14 1/2 stone. Mark says that he went off track a few times but still managed to keep going. He now feels amazing, healthier and much more confident.

Well done Mark. I think everyone will agree that you look fantastic and should feel very proud of yourself.