

Investing in Children Membership Award™

Evaluation of Barnardos' Family Support and Day-care Service, Thurles, Co Tipperary



Introduction

I attended the evaluation with Jacqueline Concannon, Participation and Partnership Officer, West, for the Investing in Children Membership Award™. We met with 7 children who were participants of the Barnardos' Family Support and Day-care Service at the time of writing this report.

For the purpose of this evaluation, we met with **Amelia, Ethan, Alex, Sameer, Jamie lee, Samantha and Jayden.**

Barnardos Thurles

Barnardos operates centres in over 40 local communities across the country, working with vulnerable children and their families. Barnardos work is child-focused, responding to the needs of the individual child and their family and aims to provide practical and professional supports to children and their parents in order to support children in challenging circumstances.

- Barnardos' vision is an Ireland where childhood is valued and all children and young people are cherished equally.
- Barnardos' mission is to challenge and support families, communities, society and government to make Ireland the best place in the world to be a child, focusing specifically on children and young people whose well-being is under threat.

The key target group of the Thurles service is children and families who have been identified as requiring intensive family support in order to improve outcomes for children. The target group is referred to the project through a number of channels, primarily the local social work departments, but also through other Tusla professionals, Schools, PHNs, CAMHS, GP's, Meitheal, Community Projects and by families themselves. The Service also delivers some group-work programmes which take referrals from the wider North Tipperary area.

Background

The Thurles project consists of a busy family support and early years' service. The project supports and challenges children, parents and carers to achieve their full potential. Their aim with this piece of work was to provide a more appropriate and comfortable space for children when they visit the Barnardos Centre. They wanted to create a warm and nurturing environment where children can feel safe to express themselves. They felt that by supporting and facilitating the children to create a more child friendly space this in turn would enhance children's participation in the service.



The “**Meeting Room**” was identified by the children as an area that they use, however, in their opinion was “**not child friendly**” and needed to be redesigned.

“**It was boring before**”. “**It was plain**”. A

“**There was blue carpet and it was itchy**”. “**I didn’t like the floor**”. S, JL

“**There were one or two things like frames on the walls but the rest was plain**”. J

“**The rest looked like grey**”. J

From attending Child and Youth Participation training 2 years ago, staff created an individual action plan and incorporated changes from same.

Decorating the alley way was part of that Individual action plan and they worked with the children who painted the walls and the gates – “**they were iron and boring**”. A

“**My name is on the wall and outside and my two brothers and its nice for others to see the things we changed**” “**We did the painting outside in the alley way**”. J



Opportunities for dialogue and change

The staff team devised a questionnaire and supported the young people in filling in the form, they also checked in with the children in their role as key workers to get their opinions.

The children firstly came up with the name for the room and called it “**the Cozy Zone**” and created a sign for the door.



“We had like an interview” “We filled a sheet or a questionnaire where we rated the room 1-10”. S

“I don’t know English so I didn’t fill the sheet” “I gave the idea of a chalk board or the chalk painted wall”. J

“I didn’t do the sheet. I said shelves would be good”. A

“There was a boring clock on the wall. I gave the idea of a new clock. That got changed but this one is hard to read”. S

“I painted part of the rainbow”. JL

“I gave the idea of a chill corner and chose the furniture. I went for the rainbow theme. We all painted the rainbow together. We got carpet and bean bags and stuff” ”We looked them up on websites and chose the things”. S

The chill corner - Colour of the walls - Painted a rainbow in the chill corner



“Before the chill corner I’d just sit here and it wasn’t as fun”. S

“It’s less boring and way cooler. I love coming here”. E

How and who picked out the paint colour and the pieces of furniture?

Some of the children helped by looking on the web and picking out the items – picked the shelves the clock

They all painted picture frames and paintings encased in the frame, which are hung on the wall. Chalk paint was painted on to one wall.





When asked do you like how it looks now?

All agreed yes they like “**running in and jumping on the bean bags in the chill corner**”, they said ‘**its way less boring**’. JL, S

Some children said they know when their ‘**time here finishes their names will be on the walls with their painting**’. S, J

I asked was anyone involved in painting the alleyway that leads into the building.

Some of the children did help with the painting one boy helped with the Fortnight piece of artwork. Some children painted the tiles on the wall opposite the entrance and helped paint the railing from a dull grey to lots of different colours.



Should the centre get the award for listening and putting ideas into practice?

Answer “yes”

Is it important to ask children their opinions?

Answer “yes”

Recommendations made by the children

They would like the table a different colour rather than the wood colour they have. Maybe use a table cloth. A

Get rid of the Velux window, as it does not work. A

“The clock does not have numbers to help tell the time, they could paint the numbers on the clock”. S

“If I was to change anything I’d leave this wall plain so others could do what they would like”. J

Conclusion

I have no hesitation in recommending Barnardos Family Support and Day-care Service, for Investing in Children Membership Award™ and when asked, the children agreed that “**Yes**” they would recommend the service for the award.

The following children have endorsed this report and recommend that Barnardos Family Support and Day-care Service should receive their Investing in Children Membership Award™. They were **Jamie Lee and Samantha** who were supported by the team when the report was written.

I would like to thank everyone who helped me with this evaluation and finish by saying,

“Well done.”

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