



# Barnardos



Photos : Aengus McMahon

With help from The Ireland Funds, **Barnardos** is improving the lives of Ireland's most vulnerable families and children.

## Barnardos is Ireland's largest children's charity.

Since 1962 It has worked with families to assist children of all ages. With a goal of breaking through the cycle of disadvantage, it provides numerous direct services to families including breakfast clubs, early intervention, counseling for children who have witnessed violence, and practical home support.



At any moment in one of the 40+ centers they maintain across the island of Ireland, Barnardos is hard at work feeding children, helping homeless families in crisis, and advocating for the rights of children in the court system.

**The Ireland Funds has been a longtime supporter of Barnardos' key programs and most recently provided a Flagship Grant of €40,000 euros 2017 to provide direct support to families experiencing homelessness in North Dublin.**

### What are some of the challenges facing Ireland's homeless families?

Families are being moved out of their communities, away from their families, schools and local supports to temporary homeless accommodation which is often hotels. Children arriving into centers are often exhausted because their sleep has been disturbed due to other guests in these places. Sometimes children only have the space between their beds to play within the accommodation.

Families do not have access to cooking facilities. If they are lucky, they may have access to a microwave. Mostly families are forced to live off fast food which is detrimental to the family's health and children's development. Family meals are shared sitting on beds. Families often only have access to a washing machine for one hour per week.

Children are suffering low self-esteem, anxiety, confusion and helplessness as they try to cope with the insecurity of homelessness and the associated pressure on their parents. Children are falling behind in school or missing school days because of long commutes from homelessness accommodation and restricted space to do homework in the evening.

## Flagship Grant support from

The Ireland Funds has been hugely significant for families and has been applied in very practical ways.

It has been used to support family functioning; to facilitate the continued attendance of children to Barnardos' daily services; to support daily family needs; and to enable family time to promote well-being and provide a sense of dignity to these families as they struggle to cope in an extremely difficult crisis situation.

## Transport & Fuel

- Travel & petrol vouchers to access daily services
- Financial assistance to attend medical care and developmental appointments
- Household items, food vouchers to access healthy meals

## Educational Support

- Financial support to access afterschool and homework clubs to support education
- Children are able to complete their homework and partake in sports activities

## Family Time & Outings

- Cinema vouchers or play centers vouchers
- Trips to the zoo, aquatic center and a farm
- Financial support to facilitate children to attend mid-term and summer camps

Pictured – Ireland Funds' donor Tom Codd with a young client of Barnardos.





**“The Ireland Funds Flagship Grant has been wonderful for Barnardos.** *It has made such a substantial difference to the lives of children and their families who are experiencing homelessness. Having this funding available has meant that a number of children were able to continue attending our early years care and education program which meant that their developmental needs continued to be monitored and addressed. It also meant that children living in chaotic home environments experienced safe, familiar and stimulating environments.*

*The Ireland Funds Flagship Grant has also been amazing for families who have finally been rehoused, these families had been living in temporary accommodation for some time and have no belongings to equip a house with. To be able to buy beds, bedding etc. for the children’s bedrooms means that the transition out of homelessness and into a new home has been made much easier for children. Our families have been so grateful for this support, some cry with happiness when we have been able to help. Thank you so much, we could not have done this without The Ireland Funds.” — Siobhan Greene, Barnardos Director of Children's Services*



## Meet some of the North Dublin Children You Have Helped



### Aisling

*a 3-year old from a family of seven*

Aisling's family was referred to Barnardos due to domestic violence and addiction. Aisling was then referred by Barnardos for a full developmental assessment which began with the Assessment of Need.

Aisling's overall development is quite delayed, and she needs one-to-one support in Barnardos. Her speech and language have improved during the year she has been attending Barnardos but she still requires a lot of support, especially around her social and emotional development.

When families are homeless it is often very difficult for parents to keep on top of appointments in relation to their children. Letters from other agencies can get lost and appointments are easily missed. Barnardos was able to advocate for Aisling's assessment and assist her mother with following up on this. Without this direct support from Barnardos this child and family would have received an assessment much later, further compromising Aisling's development.

The Flagship funding has helped with the cost of transport. Funding was used towards petrol for the family car enabling her mother to drive Aisling to Barnardos daily and her older siblings to school. Without this, it is very likely that the children would have missed out on their schooling throughout the year. The funding was also used towards family trips out and food vouchers to support some quality family time and access to varied nutrition.

### Simon

*a 3-year old from a family of four*

Simon's family became homeless in 2016. His family lived in rental accommodation, but the landlord decided to sell the home. The family was given adequate notice but rental rates in the area had become prohibitively expensive.

In addition, this family was not entitled to any social welfare support due to their legal status in Ireland. A considerable amount of work was done in relation to this and Barnardos advocated on behalf of this family with Fingal County Council and Focus Ireland (homelessness charity). As a result, Simon's family is for now provided with homeless accommodation and a free legal center is advocating for them to be placed on the housing list.

The Flagship funding has assisted with transport for Simon to attend the Barnardos pre-school daily and return to his temporary accommodation in a neighboring county afterwards. It has also enabled the purchase of public transport which helped Simon's three older sisters to remain in school in Co. Dublin. This funding has enabled Simon's mother to attend and complete her training and gain a new qualification. During his year with Barnardos, Simon's self-esteem and social skills have improved a great deal. He is now able to share and take turns and presents as a very happy little boy who is ready for primary school.

**Suzanne Connolly** was formerly the Director of Children's Services for Barnardos, a role which she held for 17 years. She became the CEO of Barnardos in late 2018. *Connect Magazine* sat down with her to learn about how The Ireland Funds is helping Barnardos bring hope to families facing adversity.

## Q. What brings children and families to Barnardos?

**A.** Parents can feel overwhelmed for a variety of reasons which brings them through our doors. There may be issues in the home around poor mental health, domestic abuse, addiction, parental separation or perhaps a bereavement. All of these issues are exacerbated by high levels of disadvantage and poverty. A child may be experiencing behavioural or emotional problems and the family is simply in need of additional supports with parenting or a more serious intervention depending on the situation.

## Q. What happens when a child is referred to a Barnardos centre? Can you share an anecdotal story around Barnardos impact on a particular child or family?

**A.** We often receive referrals from schools. A teacher may observe that a child is withdrawn or acting out in the classroom and refer the child and family onto Barnardos. Barnardos will meet with that child to determine what might be going on in his/her life that is causing them upset. We never work with a child without involving their parents and so we would meet with the parents as well to get

a full picture of the family's needs. We work with a lot of families where the 'toxic three' exist; mental health difficulties, domestic abuse and addiction. One of the most challenging issues we deal with is domestic abuse and the devastating impact it can have on families.

Last September we began working with a six year old boy in our project in West Dublin. Finn\* was a very quiet and tense child that presented as having high levels of anxiety. He was living in a home where violence and addiction were present and Barnardos was working with him and his mother through our family support and after school service. Finn was finding it difficult to concentrate at school and his mind used to wander to the thoughts of what might be happening at home. He hardly ever spoke a word and was silent much of the time. He found it difficult to make friends and was a very nervous and jumpy child. Domestic abuse is present in many of the families we work with. Its effects on children are often overlooked or underestimated, but they can suffer profound and long-lasting consequences. Finn has slowly begun to tell his story and my colleagues are working with him to help him make sense of his experiences and feelings. As we have a very low turnover of front-line staff in Barnardos, he can return to us if he needs to in the future and feel a sense of connection and safety, this is hugely important in bringing about positive outcomes for a family.

Once isolated, scared, distracted and withdrawn, Finn now has a chance now to make friends with other children in his after-school group. He has a place to play with them without fear and space to forget his worries and be a child again.

*\*Finn is not his real name.*

The Ireland Funds Flagship Grant Support:  
Individuals and Families supported from March 2017–December 2018

**62** families / **152** individuals

## **Q. What would you say is the biggest issue facing children and families in Ireland right now? Has that changed in recent years?**

**A.** Ireland has become very consumerist and children are now under immense pressure from social media and wider society. There is a real gap in understanding of what children actually need to be both emotionally and mentally healthy and how damaging this focus on presentation and consumption is to their sense of self-worth and development. The Growing Up in Ireland survey now finds that 1 in 5 children in Ireland is in need of social and emotional support. Some families are very good at seeking this out, whereas many are not, particularly those living in disadvantage. We need accessible community-based services to meet this need. In Barnardos, a child and parent will always find a warm, nurturing environment. There is always an understanding voice on the end of phone or a welcoming face at the door of one of our centres and this is essential to the impact of our work.

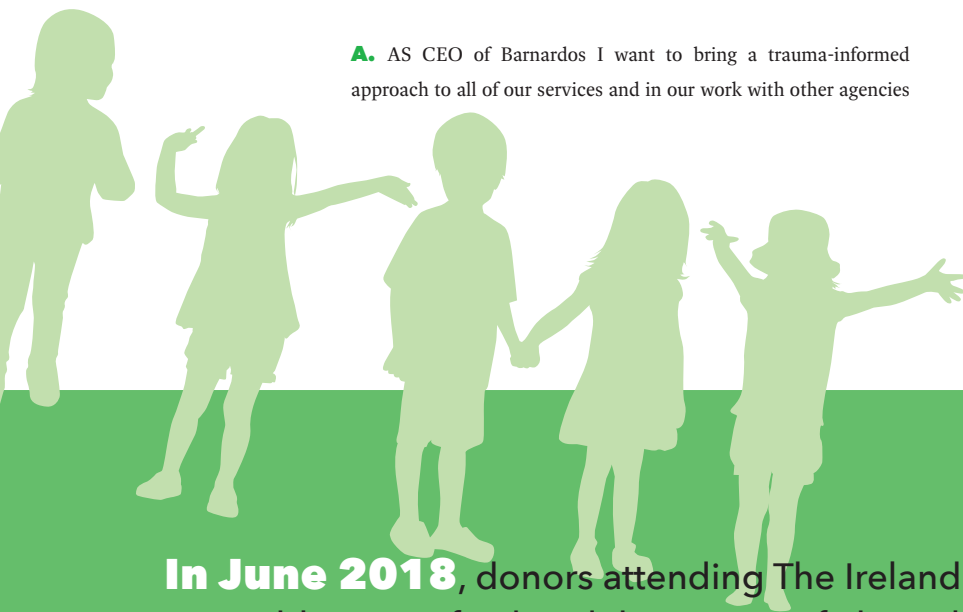
## **Q. You've recently taken up the role of CEO at Barnardos. What motivates you? And what do you hope to achieve now you're at the helm?**

**A.** AS CEO of Barnardos I want to bring a trauma-informed approach to all of our services and in our work with other agencies

using the most up-to-date research into human development. I want us to take a whole person perspective when we work with a child, to acknowledge how trauma first presents within the body, before manifesting in the mind and is then communicated through our behaviours. In Barnardos, we are working with future generations of adults, early intervention and a deep understanding of the lifetime consequences of trauma is key to creating change and positive impact for children. I also believe that we really need to examine how it is that we are guiding our children to have connection and meaning in their lives as they develop within an increasingly consumerist and digital society.

## **Q. How has The Ireland Funds' support made a difference to Barnardos?**

**A.** The support Barnardos receives from The Ireland Funds is truly fantastic. The Flagship funding we were granted in 2017 to support families experiencing homelessness in North Dublin made a huge difference to the lives of almost 300 children and parents. It enabled us to support the social and emotional health of over 60 families going through the chaos of homelessness. It really helped these families to cope and to maintain some sense of normalcy and balance in their lives in the midst of a crisis. The funding was used for very practical needs and items and for parents to spend quality time with their children, which is hugely important for their relationships and for a child's healthy development. We are extremely grateful to The Ireland Funds for all of their support and for their belief in the value of our work with children and families.



**In June 2018**, donors attending The Ireland Funds Worldwide Conference were able to see firsthand the impact of The Ireland Funds' support of Barnardos as they visited a local breakfast program for children in need.