



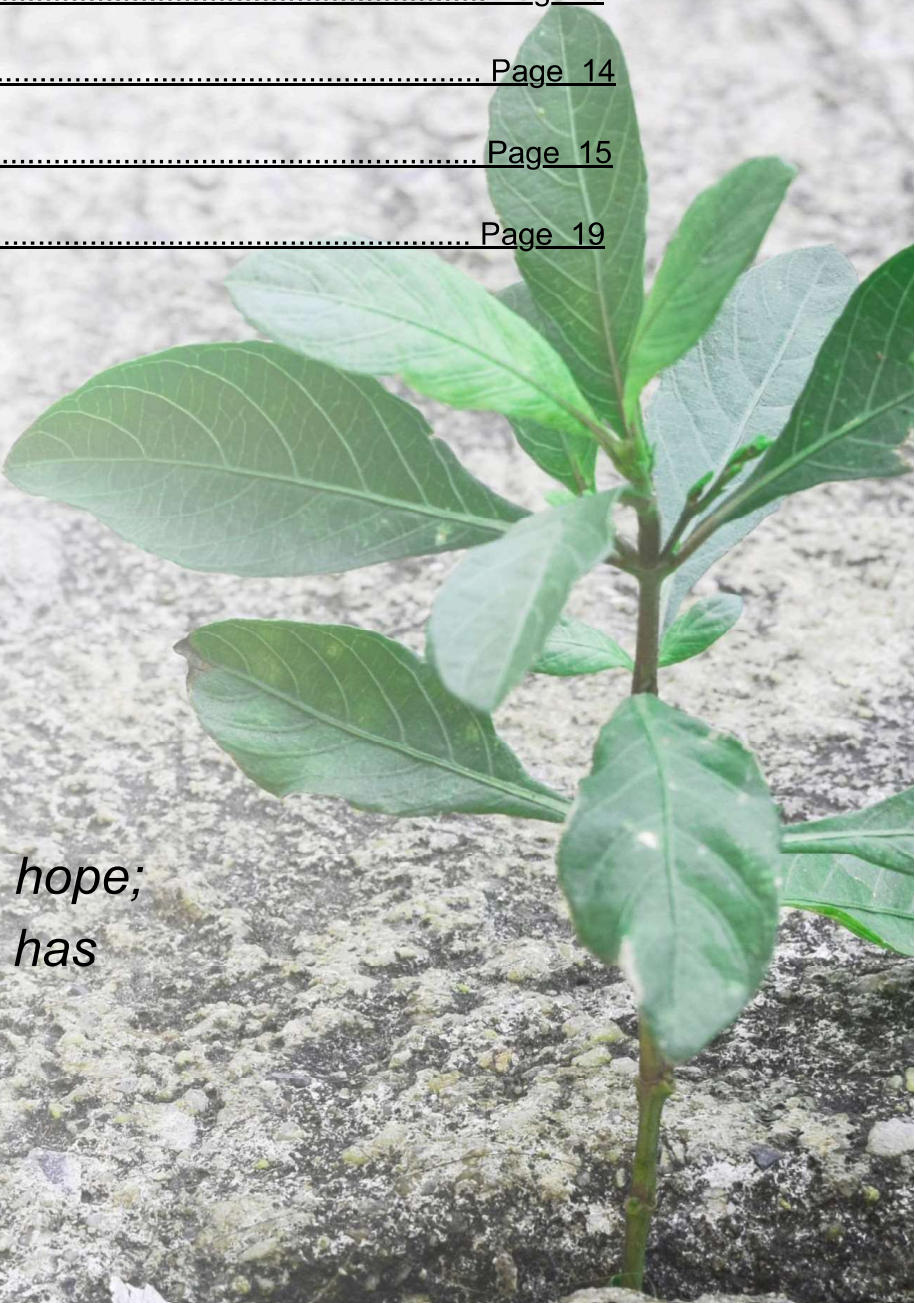
# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2023

*Serving Communities in Knocknaheeny,  
Hollyhill and Surrounding Areas Since 1998*

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*“He who has health, has hope;  
and he who has hope, has  
everything.”*

Thomas Carlyle

# Chairman's Address



On behalf of the Board of Trustees and my own behalf, I am delighted to welcome the 2023 Annual Report on the NICHE Health Project. NICHE is inspired by a clear and coherent vision of community health and its determinants. In our work we draw on a model of local community leadership, consultation and participation, working in partnership with other groups, agencies and organisations both within and beyond our local community.

We are supported by a dedicated and professional team of Community Health Workers, management, administrative and maintenance staff.

This report presents an overview of an impressive and comprehensive range of activities, projects and services, reflecting the dynamism and cohesion of our local community and addressing the interests and needs (both social and health related) of diverse groups within the community.

I am very grateful to the Health Service Executive (HSE), Cork North Community Work Department who provide core funding to NICHE. We are also grateful to receive funding support from the HSE Sláintecare Communities Programme, Cork City Council, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and Pobal.

It is great privilege to serve as Chair of the Board of Trustees of NICHE. I would like to thank my fellow board members for their commitment and dedication to NICHE. On behalf of all board members, I would like to express our deep appreciation to the staff of NICHE for their outstanding work, their passion for the project and commitment to serving the needs of our local community. NICHE acts as the lead agency for the Hollyhill/Knocknaheeny Family Resource Centre which provides preschool and creche services for the community. This is a wonderful resource for the community and the board are deeply grateful to the staff of the Family Centre for their excellent work and care for the children attending the Centre and their families. We are also deeply grateful to the local community for their support and engagement with NICHE.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank Mr Brian Kelleher for his exemplary work as Manager of the NICHE project from January 2018 until December 2023 and take this opportunity to welcome Ms Martina Ryan who has joined us as Executive Director of NICHE in 2024.

*Professor Ivan Perry*

**Chairman of NICHE Health Project (Cork) CLG**

Company number 617576 | Charity number 20204483 | CHY 22398

## Board of Trustees in 2023

Chairman: Professor Ivan Perry  
Treasurer: Eileen Collins  
Secretary: Angela Kalaitzake (joined 2023)  
Director: Sandra Cogan Williamson (joined 2023)  
Director: Robert Sheehan (joined 2023)  
Director: Eugene O Connor (retired 2023)  
Director: Maria Roura (retired 2023)  
Director: Eileen Williamson (retired 2023)  
Member: Michelle O Sullivan (joined 2023)  
Member: Edel Burke (joined 2023)

## Staff Members in 2023

Brian Kelleher - Manager (resigned 2023)  
Carmel Murphy - Administrator  
Paula Casey - Community Health Worker  
Caroline Vasseur - Community Health Worker (joined 2023)  
Maria Hopkins - Community Health Worker  
Stephanie Fogarty - Community Health Worker (resigned 2023)  
Yvonne Tsang - Community Gardener/Community Health Worker  
Vanessa Meseguer - Social Prescriber  
Stephen Comerford - Maintenance Worker

Solicitors:  
Fitzgerald Solicitors  
6 Lapps Quay  
Cork

Auditors:  
Wentworth  
1E North Valley Bus Centre,  
Mallow Rd, Cork.

Bank:  
Permanent TSB,  
Blackpool Shopping Centre,  
Cork

# About NICHE

## Our Vision:

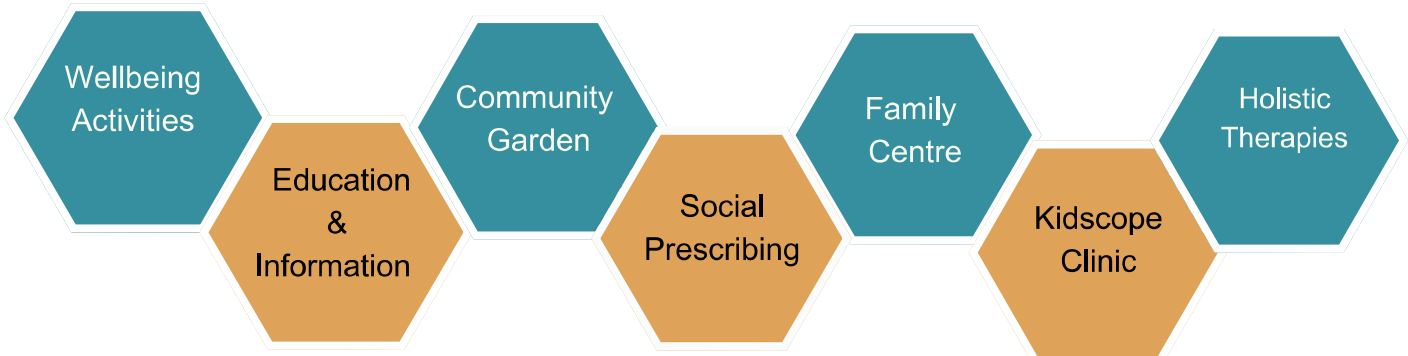
That all people in Knocknaheeny, Hollyhill and surrounding areas can live full and healthy lives.

## Our Mission:

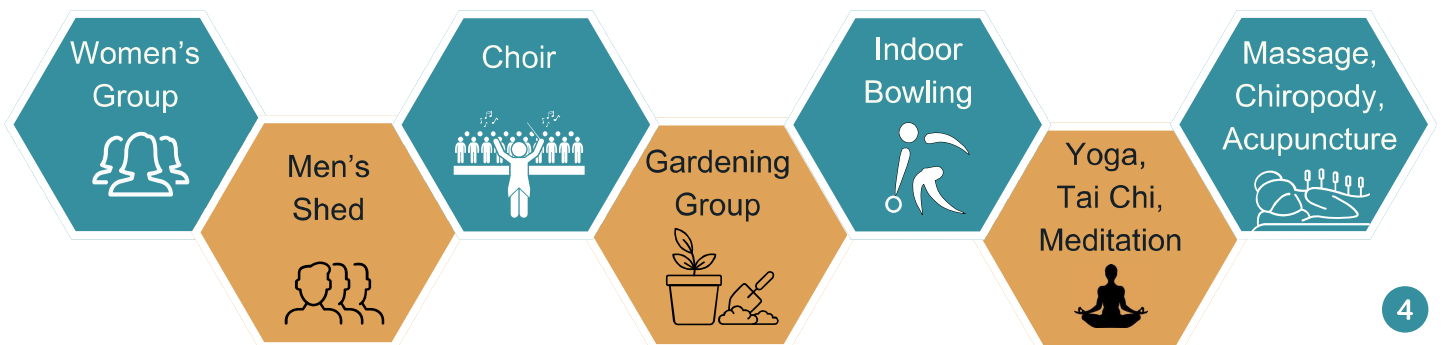
To involve the local community in meaningful partnerships with NICHE and others to develop actions which improve and sustain health and wellbeing outcomes.

## Our Model:

Adopting a capacity building model, NICHE Project aims to improve health and wellbeing by engaging and supporting communities through collaborative partnerships with individuals, groups and other agencies and organisations.



- ✓ NICHE is a community health project that aims to improve the health and well-being of community members primarily living in the Knocknaheeny and Hollyhill areas of Cork City.
- ✓ As a project, NICHE's work engages with the local community. NICHE also works in partnerships with community-based organisations, various stakeholders, local healthcare providers, and government agencies.
- ✓ NICHE is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. NICHE is core funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE), Cork North Community Work Department.
- ✓ NICHE is governed by a Board of Trustees with representation from the local community, Cork City Council, the HSE Community Work Department (in an advisory capacity when required), the School of Public Health in UCC and the National Suicide and Research Foundation. The role of the Board is to lead the strategic and policy development of the project.
- ✓ NICHE is core funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE), Cork North Community Work Department. NICHE also receives funding under the HSE Sláintecare Communities Programme. We also receive funding from Cork City Council and other adhoc sources. Funding sources for additional and supported programmes come from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), HSE, Cork City Council and Pobal for the Family Centre.
- ✓ NICHE acts as the lead agency for the Hollyhill/Knocknaheeny Family Resource Centre.



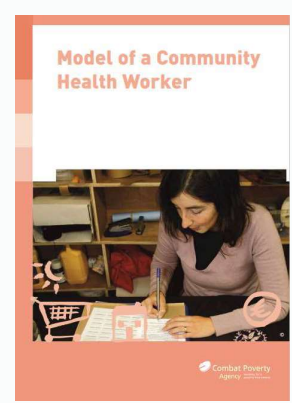
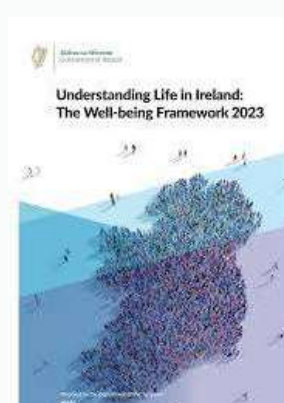
# Community Health

- ✓ The WHO defines community health as the environmental, social, and economic resources needed to sustain emotional and physical wellbeing among people.
- ✓ Community health emphasises role of individuals as determinants of their own and other people's health.
- ✓ Community health focuses on the maintenance, protection, and improvement of the health status of population groups, in particular those who are a part of disadvantaged communities.
- ✓ Informed by current findings and policy, community work responds to emerging local needs.



*'Healthcare is vital to all of us some of the time, but public health is vital to all of us all of the time.'*

**C. Everett Koop**



## Community Health Workers

- ✓ Community Health Workers are the backbone of NICHE. By understanding and integrating into the community, they create needs led initiatives, as well as providing informal support, information and guidance.
- ✓ By including and consulting the community regarding the design and delivery of initiatives they strive to enhance health outcomes, empowerment and capacity of the community.
- ✓ Connection and collaboration are at the core of our work, not only with members of the community but also with other organisations and agencies, for together we are stronger.

*'Community Health Workers play a pivotal role in enhancing and improving the health and wellbeing of a community through their work in developing targeted health-focused initiatives.'*

**Priscilla Lynch,**

Head of Primary Care, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare

NICHE Health Project is fortunate to operate from two facilities. Having two locations enables NICHE to provide opportunities for members of the community to engage in activities and programmes in both indoor and outdoor settings, ensuring we can meet a range of needs and interests.

1

### The HSE Building Knocknaheeny

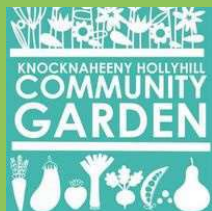
*(Located beside Credit Union on  
Harbour View Road)*



2

### Knocknaheeny & Hollyhill Community Garden

*(Located behind Applegreen Petrol  
Station on Harbour View Road)*



### Hollyhill/Knocknaheeny Community Garden

- ✓ The aim of NICHE Community Garden is to promote and enhance the health and wellbeing of the local community through access to and participation in gardening and the outdoors.
- ✓ The service extends its arms to those outside of the Knocknaheeny/Hollyhill area; openly inviting participants outside of our catchment area, to take part in our activities.



## At NICHE Community Garden, we recognise:

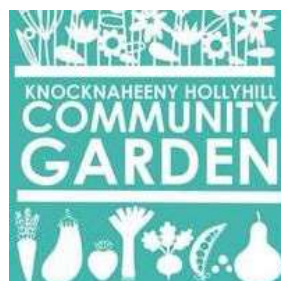
- the guiding role that a community garden has to create better health outcomes for our participants. We recognise the importance of creating 'everyday meaningful experiences' for our participants, through various garden tasks and other activities on offer.
- the benefits of social & therapeutic horticulture, and adapt tasks according to abilities & capabilities of each individual. We use plants and the Garden to improve both physical & mental health. The benefits of gardening include spending time in nature and engaging in the 'restorative effects of being in nature', literacy & numeracy skills, physical impacts of fine and gross motor skills, problem solving, memory, object identification, communication skills etc.
- that the Garden must be a 'safe space' for participants. Through the Garden we create a communal space and enable the building of social bonds.
- how the garden can introduce 'bitesize' pieces of information to participants to learn about what small actions can help them actively participate in climate justice and social justice.
- how the Garden can help improve food choices and create better understanding of growing and harvesting food. Thus improving access to healthy local grown food.



- Throughout the year, NICHE Community Garden offers weekly 'Get Gardening Group' each Tuesday 11-1pm.
- Weekly Men's Shed group runs each Thursday 11-2pm.
- The Garden is open Monday to Thursday. Visitors are welcome during this time.
- The National Learning Network include the Garden as part of their community walk and call seasonally to get a tour of the garden.
- Cope Foundation participants avail of the garden on Tuesdays as part of the 'Get Gardening Group'.



Cork  
City Council  
Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí



# Community Garden Events in 2023



## Luffa growing and sustainability

This year in the garden, we introduced the idea of growing your own **luffa sponge**. Below the pictures show the seed, to the flower and finally to the fully mature luffa. It was a long process as luffas require a long growing season. Luffas were grown in the polytunnel and participants were introduced to the idea of using luffas as either a body sponge or dish washing sponge. These were offered as alternative to plastic sponges.

Luffas can later be composted at the end of life, thus **reducing plastic waste**. It helped to encourage participants to engage in **climate justice** through learning about how one small change can make a difference. It was educational for all our visitors to learn that sponges can be grown and they are not all from the sea.

## 'Healthy Eating Made Easy'

In conjunction with Cork City Partnership, we ran 'Healthy eating made easy' in our fully equipped kitchen. The programme was really informative and well received; helping participants to make healthy food choices as well as learning about the food pyramid etc.

We enjoyed cooking each week of the programme and eating together.

6 week programme  
8 Participants



## The Men's Shed

The Mens' Shed is an integral part of the community garden. They meet every Thursday and plan different activities to work on.



The three main projects for 2023 were:

- Community giveback
- 'Sheds for Life' programme
- NICHE Christmas Crib event.

Every Tuesday 11-2pm  
Participants 4+



The Men's Shed volunteered many hours at St. Marys on the Hill School to repair and paint fencing, pruning back overgrown areas and tidy up their sensory play areas.



The Men were delighted to be able to offer their time and services to an important part of their local community.

## Sheds for Life

The Sheds for Life was a ten week programme offered by Mens' Shed Ireland organisation for groups in the Munster region. Facilitators were brought in and our 'sheddies' took part in chair based exercises, heart checks, cancer awareness, dementia awareness & healthy eating made easy.

We were proud to receive **'The Most Hospitable Shed'** at the Sheds for Life awards.

**Christmas events** are important in local communities and our Mens' Shed worked hard to create a life sized crib from scratch. With amazing teamwork, we hand drew each figure and cut out these figures with blade saws. Our creative mens' shed with the assistance of our talented local community participants who attend the garden, painted and decorated the crib.



## The Polytunnel Re-cover

With the help of our participants, and Highbank (the original fitters), our makeover was completed. A calm day was required so that the polythene would not be damaged in high winds.



Our polytunnel was approx. ten years old and had suffered damage. In July we had a full re-cover of new polythene.



## The Cork Summer Show

In March, we were approached by Healthy Ireland Fund co-ordinator to take part in the Cork Summer Show. A community gardens zone was created with planter beds grown and nurtured by eight different community gardens.

A bed was allocated to each participating garden, where we planted a **brassica bed** and were proud to show off our **prized cabbages** with a little crochet snakeshead hidden inside! We met many **new friends** and enjoyed the spirit of community. It was a weekend of sunshine and showers.



Contributions by all participants - sowing, growing and nurturing

### Get Gardening Group summer outing



A summer outing to Tramore was held in July to the Lafcadio Hearn Japanese Garden. A great trip out with music and dinner at a local hotel before heading home.

Participants: 15

### Health Promotion with the Irish Heart Foundation



The Irish Heart Foundation van pulled into the garden. A busy day for the nurses as they checked our hearts and gave advice on blood pressure. Thankfully it was a dry day, as there were queues waiting for the two busy nurses.

Participants: 20+

Participants: 30+

### Annual Garden Party as part of Cork on A Fork festival

As part of Cork on A Fork festival, we held our annual garden party and reached our hands out further to invite more people to see and enjoy our community garden. Lots of food preparations were made. Our menu included potato salad, basil pesto, hummus, courgette fritters, homemade brown bread, salads and compound herb butters. Music was provided by local HAZ band catering to all tastes in music. Face painters were a great hit with the local children.



# Flower Workshop



Participants: 9



In early March, we approached ETB facilitator Sylvia O'Connor to do a flower workshop in August. Sylvia promotes flower arranging with local foraged flowers as opposed to shop bought imported flowers. Seeds were sown in March to grow in our community garden for use later in the year for the workshop.

Sylvia foraged flowers from local hedgerows and derelict sites to supplement our arrangements. Everyone enjoyed picking from the garden and learning how to harvest, and condition flowers. It was simple - gather, cut and make bouquets!

## Aromatherapy & soap making workshop

Participants: 9

In July we held a soap-making workshop with Debbie Moriarty aromatherapist. The workshop was co-facilitated by our Community Gardener Yvonne Tsang.

Debbie talked about the different essential oils, their benefits and uses. Yvonne also demonstrated how to make cold-process soap.



## Children's' Picnics

Two separate picnics were held in the Garden. In June, the children from the Family centre arrived with childcare workers for bubbles and adventure in the garden.

In July a Teddy Bears Picnic was held for children attending Barnardo's. The children came down and enjoyed their disco in the new garden cabin with their teddy bears.

Participants: 10+ each



## Christmas Dinner

Christmas dinner is organised for all garden participants to join us at the Garden. Preparations are made the day before for peeling of potatoes etc.

Some participants brought a dish to share. Participants enjoyed music and singing over the table.

Participants: 10



NICHE is fortunate to be a host to Social Prescribing for the Knocknaheeny/Hollyhill area. This is funded under Sláintecare.

In 2021, Sláintecare Healthy Ireland in the Department of Health, working with the HSE and local authorities and community agencies, launched the Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme to provide increased health and wellbeing services in 19 community areas across Ireland. An evidenced based process identified local areas in which health and wellbeing risk factors are particularly concentrated and where particular initiatives will be delivered to help promote and improve the overall health and wellbeing of people in those communities. One of these initiative's is Social Prescribing

Social prescribing recognises that health is heavily determined by social factors such as poverty, isolation, and loneliness. Social prescribing offers GPs and other health professionals a means of referring people to a range of non-clinical community supports to meet their social needs.

Social Prescribing is a free service funded by the HSE that aims to link people to community groups, organisations, and statutory services for practical and emotional support to promote people's health and wellbeing.

One of the key roles of the social prescribing link worker is to establish and develop strong relationships with a range of community groups and health services locally including primary care, mental health, community dietitians, self-management support programmes etc.

Health inequalities are faced by those living in the community served by NICHE so access to health services is vital to address the health needs of the community.

The social prescribing link worker supports the service user to access local voluntary community and social enterprise organisations or services through discussion and joint decision.

- ✓ Up to eight sessions.
- ✓ Fosters person-centeredness.
- ✓ Flexible and community focused.
- ✓ Relationship-based approach.
- ✓ Generic service, not specialised - not counselling.



### Who is the Social Prescriber?

Vanessa Meseguer is the Social Prescriber based in NICHE Health Project, Knocknaheeny. Vanessa also has an office space in Teach Mhuire, Day Care Centre, Mayfield.

The catchment area covers part of the Community Healthcare Network 8 & 9: Hollyhill, Knocknaheeny, Gurranaברה, Churchfield, Blackpool, Farranree, Ballyvolane, The Glen and Mayfield.

## Who can make a referral?

Any primary care health professional (such as a G.P. community nurse, or occupational therapist) may refer a patient who is over the age of eighteen. In addition, self-referrals are welcomed as well as referrals from community-based organisations.



Referral forms are available at the Wellbeing Network under the Sláintecare Healthy Communities tab,

## Who is social prescribing suitable for?

Social Prescribing is a short-term service, suitable for adults over the age of 18 years who want to improve their quality of life. In particular, those:

- who are lonely
- socially isolated
- living with one or more long-term conditions
- living with mild or long-term mental health challenges such as anxiety or depression.
- who are in a state of readiness, who have arrived at a point where they are ready to make a step forward with support. Those referred to the service must be willing participants
- who are frequent GP/ED attendees and may benefit from other social supports outside of clinical services

## How does it work?

Once I get the referral, I will make contact with the person through a phone call, I will explain about the service and if it is agreed upon, arrange a time to meet in person.

The first meeting, is more like a brief consultation where we will have a chat that will help me to get to know the person a bit more and understand their context, needs, and interests.

In the following meeting, I will provide some options available in the community, and we will co-produce a plan to achieve the goal set.

Typically, that plan entails a phone call or follow-up meeting to see how the person is doing and to identify any potential roadblocks. If someone needs it, I can go to a class or group activity for the first or second time.

The programme is considered completed when the referred have either: engaged in a meaningful activity, have had their needs met or have been referred on.

## What are the benefits to the individual?

Improved health and wellbeing, more social connections, support with information to make informed decisions, support to cope with a long-term health conditions, lifelong learning opportunities, developing personal skills, improving self-confidence and developing healthier habits to incorporate into daily life.

This is a free service and the community resources discussed would be free or low-cost.

## What are the benefits to the GP or other Health Care Professional?

Improved patient outcomes, physically and mentally and a potential reduction in medical appointments in a case where the person's real needs are social or community related.



## 2023 in numbers:

- 79** referrals in 2023 (34 males, 45 females)
- 63** referrals received between May and December 2023
- 14** not interested when contact was made
- 8** were unreachable
- 5** could not engage for different reasons: being housebound, not having access to transport, health issues or mobility issues.
- 4** were not ready to engage (mental health issues, active addiction, complex social needs, not having their basic needs met.)

The main reason for referral is isolation and loneliness. Other predominant reasons are mental health difficulties and stress/life events.

*The target for the link worker is 120 new open cases per year for a well-established service and a target of 100 for a new service (up and running 12 months or less).*

### Waiting list

I began to meet clients in June 2023 who had been on the waiting list for six months. By the end of the year, the waiting list was reduced to three months\*.

### Challenges:

Some clients referred into the services have higher needs, beyond the scope of social prescribing. Examples of inappropriate referrals include people who are housebound, people with advanced dementia or people with long term and enduring mental health challenges who are not yet at the stage of their recovery journey where they are ready to engage with community groups and services.

- Transport to and from activities was identified as a barrier particularly older people and those experiencing mobility issues/chronic pain.
- Lack of social groups for people aged 30-50 who are not interested in seeking employment/education/volunteer.
- The waiting list to avail of public mental health services and the financial struggle to avail of private options.
- Shifting from a dependent model of support to a more proactive one, where people learn to take control over their wellbeing and to co-produce a care plan where they need to take action to move forward.
- The lack of activities/groups over the summer months.



*\*The current waiting list in 2024 is between 4-6 weeks.*

## What is working well:

- Referrals that were sent by GP were mostly people who wouldn't have or hadn't connected to community resources without social prescribing.
- Referrals who can identify their needs and are motivated to make changes.
- Placing myself in two locations to meet people in person.
- Building relationships: "It's not enough to read about services. You need to see them, meet the people involved, and know what the client can expect so that you can easily facilitate a connection."
- Having a network to support our work (external supervision, informal meetings with colleagues, National Peer support group, ECHO, Sláintecare Coordinator,...).

*I look forward to meeting with and working with members of the community in 2024.*

*Vanesa Meseguer*

NICHE Social Prescriber



## Men's Indoor Bowling

Indoor bowls is attended by an average of 8 each week in St Mary's Hall, Foyle Ave Knocknaheeny and aims to enhance social connection, belonging & wellbeing. Indoor bowling sessions provide a supportive environment for social engagement, helps build friendships, reducing isolation and loneliness, improving mood and fitness.

The men's indoor bowls engage with an annual local competition during the summer. This is an enjoyable competitive day show casing their bowling skills.



## Time for me

The 'Time for me' programme brought people together in a nice calm space to encourage positive mental health and to enable them to use the tips they learn from this programme on a daily basis to reduce stress and help them feel calm. The group also learn how to use aromatherapy oils and are given a bottle to take home. This programme ran three times over the year on a Wednesday morning in a block of four weeks. There was 18 clients in total.



## Art Classes



Art workshops started in NICHE in January. There was a maximum of 8 who could attend the class as it is a painting class and participants needed full attention from the tutor. It went very well and all the participants have painted beautiful works of art and are hoping to display their art next year.

## Chair Yoga

Chair Yoga helps participants who have mobility issues to exercise in a safe & comfortable way. Chair yoga ran on a Wednesday morning and we had three 6 week blocks. It was very popular and always busy. There was a core group of 6 people.

## Drum Fitness

Debbie ran a four week drum fitness class with the senior citizens in January. Drum fitness is a simple fun way to impact adults lives both physically and mentally. It is a cardio based drumming programme that combines physical activity with brain fitness. 15 people who took part.

## Tai Chi

Tai Chi is one of NICHE's core programmes and has been running for many years. It promotes physical activity, improves flexibility and promotes positive mental health. There are an average of 15 people who attend on a regular basis. There were 5 new people who started last year and are now involved in the women's group.

## Aerobics

We ran a two week taster session of aerobics in July. There was 20 who attended each session. The participants loved the aerobics and we are hoping to find a suitable space large enough to host it again in the future.

## Sing Your Heart Out Choir

The Sing Your Heart Out Choir is a community singing group of 15. The choir focuses on singing songs from contemporary, gospel, and world music traditions. NICHE provides a welcoming and inclusive environment for members to sing together and make new friends. The choir has performed at various events including The National Heritage Week celebrations. They also collaborated with other community health initiatives, Knocknaheeny/Hollyhill Men's Shed in the celebration and launch of their Life-size Christmas Nativity Crib. A recital of Christmas favourites songs was enjoyed by all on a peaceful Christmas evening in the Community Garden, Knocknaheeny, Hollyhill.

The Sing Your Heart Out Choir exemplifies how community singing programs can positively impact mental health outcomes and promote wellbeing within a local community setting.



## Kidscope Clinic



Coordinated by Let's Grow Together, NICHE hosts Kidscope clinic on Thursdays. Kidscope is a community-based clinic that offers free health and developmental assessments and referral for children aged 0-6 who live in the Northwest area of Cork City. It is led by Consultant Paediatrician Dr Louise Gibson and is delivered in partnership with an interdisciplinary team of paediatricians, 4th yr medical students from UCC, community medical doctors and practitioners from local agencies including Let's Grow Together, NICHE and Tusla Springboard Child & Family Support Service.

## Women's Group

NICHE Women's Group is an integral part of NICHE's community health model, which aims to promote health and wellbeing using a community development approach.

By participating in arts based activities, the women's group has found new means of individual expression, communication, and enhanced self-confidence and esteem. The women's group participated in several art-based projects, workshops & daytrips such as:

- ✓ Homemade candles
- ✓ Easter wreaths
- ✓ Monthly Tea Dances
- ✓ International Women's Day
- ✓ Bunratty Castle & Folk Park
- ✓ Fota Garden Tour
- ✓ Cork On A Fork
- ✓ Lafcadio Hearn Japanese garden, Tramore

Approx. 16 attendees weekly



## Massage

There are great health benefits from Holistic Massage. Massage can relieve tension in your muscles, and most people use it for relaxation, relief of stress and anxiety, or to reduce muscle soreness. Massage can also cause your body to release natural painkillers, and it boosts your immune system.

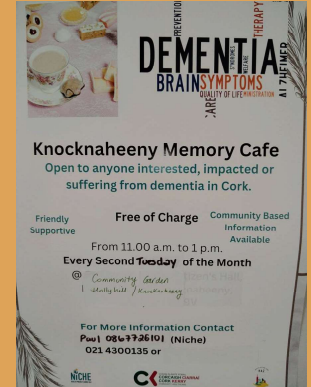
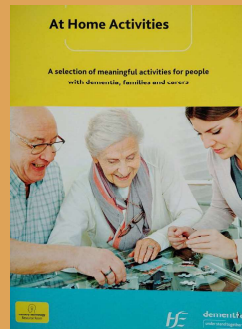
Participants find it very beneficial, providing them a space to switch off and relax during the therapy session. It also gives the client a chance to talk to the Community Health Workers and some have been referred to counselling and have availed of other programmes Niche offer.

**49 people seen  
- 8 new clients**

## The Memory Café

The Knocknaheeny Memory Café has been running since June 2022. It is a café for people and their carers living with Dementia. Running on the 2nd Monday of every month from 11am to 1pm. We had different facilitators for the 12 cafes. Some of these were:

- Hand massage
- Art workshop
- Session by Age Action
- Session by Mercy hospital

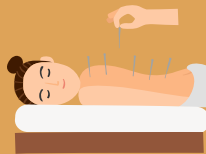


## Acupuncture

NICHE facilitates participants to access Acupuncture at low cost. It is used by clients experiencing chronic physical pain while waiting on operations or who have long term damage to their bodies.

It helps relieve pain, which in turn helps with increased mobility and improved mood. It's an affordable local accessible service.

**44 people seen  
8 new clients**



## Chiropody

NICHE facilitates low cost Chiropody. Our Chiropodist runs a clinic once a month.

Those experiencing painful feet often report reduced mood and limitations in their mobility, which in turn affects their ability to attend appointments, groups and therefore limits their social interactions. By providing this low cost service, clients of chiropody can also hear about and avail of NICHE'S other groups and activities.



**147 people seen**



### Student Placement:

NICHE was very fortunate to have Amy Linehan on student placement for 12 weeks during 2023. Amy was here as part of her Public Health Degree and helped out with our various groups and also facilitated some sessions with our Women's Group. Thank you Amy.

# Hollyhill/Knocknaheeny Family Centre



The Hollyhill Knocknaheeny Family Centre is based in a very busy suburban area of Cork City. We are an early years' service and are committed to providing a safe, nurturing and inclusive environment whereby we try our best to meet the needs of all the children.



The Family Centre continues to provide Affordable High-Quality Childcare to the families and children in the Hollyhill Knocknaheeny and surrounding areas and is funded by HSE & Pobal.



The Family Centre has 3 Preschool Rooms (2 Morning Classes, 1 Afternoon) and a Creche Part Time service. The Centre operates under the National Guidelines Framework for children under the Early Education Programme. We cater for children aged 2 to 5. We also have a part time service that children from the ECCE can avail of. Parents are entitled to two free ECCE years and they can also avail of NCS (National Childcare Scheme) where they can receive subsidy off fees.

Both the Creche and Preschool were very busy over the academic year of 2023. We are very lucky to have the community garden and the library within walking distance of the service.

The children enjoyed a lovely trip to the Community Garden in October where the Community Health Worker from NICHE organised a Halloween party of games and treats. The children got an opportunity to get their face painted and paint pumpkins.



## Summer Camp

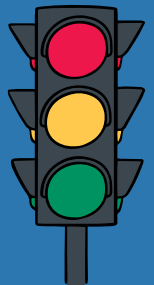
The ECCE children can stay for two weeks summer camp in July where they get to learn how to bake, cook, plant and other activities. The children last summer engaged in yoga, obstacle course, Trips to the garden and library, made scones, pizzas and lots of arts and crafts.

This playscheme is very popular amongst the ECCE families and is something we are building on year on year. It is a very different from the Highscope routine of Preschool and is very much play based with plenty of opportunities to explore new learning activities.



## Road safety

Road safety was one of the themes that the preschool focused on back in January, and they took the children out and about to learn the road safety rules about 'Stop, Look & Listen'.



Throughout the year, the children develop life skills and self-care and independence. There were opportunities when the children got to learn about birds and hamsters and got to care for their needs as they came to visit the service.



## Christmas 2023

At Christmas time the children were invited over to the youth Centre by Tony Fitzgerald to meet Santa Claus where they sang songs and posted Christmas letters. The children love to get out and about and the afternoon children jumped at the chance to go down to the Graffiti centre in Blackpool which was organised by the Cork City Partnership, where children also got to meet Santa and Frozen characters.



As we know, children learn through play and a lot of our learning happens outside in our playground. We like to get the children outside as much as possible in all weathers. We are very fortunate to have a large outside area with a bit of covered space and the children love engaging in their own play.



Adult Education courses are also a great hit at the Family Centre. We have Ballroom and Line Dancing as well as Yoga and arts and Crafts available throughout the year.

Some of these courses are funded under the CETB and it is a lovely opportunity for participants of the community to get together and interact in a safe welcoming environment.



We were very fortunate in 2023 to receive the SEEP grant from Cork City Council which we used to fund a sensory room. The sensory room has provided a safe space that some children may need to help them regulate and find a sense of calm when they become overwhelmed and sensory overloaded.



To finish up I would like to thank all the staff of the Family Centre for their continued hard work and dedication and for the NICHE Board of Management for their support throughout the year.

*Lisa O'Brien*

**Manager of Hollyhill/Knocknaheeny Family Centre**



An Roinn Leanaí  
agus Gnóthaí Óige  
Department of Children  
and Youth Affairs



# NICHE Health Project & Hollyhill/Knocknaheeny Community Garden



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