



## **ANNUAL REPORT 2023**

### **My Project... Minding You**

**WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & THEIR FAMILIES**

## CONTENTS

A message from our Project Manager	2
Our Purpose	3
Our Vision	4
Our Mission	4
Our Values	5
Our Impact 2023	6
Services provided in 2023	8
PEEP+ Parent Early Education Programme	9
Meitheal Process	10
Roots of Empathy Programme	11
Aftercare Group for young people	12
Summer Social Groups	13
Partnerships	14
DLR Let's Parent Website Launch	15
Our Funders	16
Our People	18
Traning & Development in 2023	19
Aims for 2024	20
Programme Planning for 2024	21
Team Training Goals for 2024	23
Governance	23
Directors Report	24
Board Members 2023	25
Account Records	26
Going Concern	26
Disclosure of Information	26
Auditor	26
Risk Management	27

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PROJECT MANAGER

The team at My Project family support services worked tirelessly throughout 2023 to support children, young people and their families through one to one sessions and group programmes. Families seeking supports at My Project did so for many reasons including poor family connections / family breakdown, social isolation and anxiety, poor mental health, conflict in the home, school avoidance, homelessness, hidden harm, parenting challenges and young persons substance misuse supports.

2023 was a year of ongoing pressure on community services due to the continuing high number of families being referred and seeking supports. Looking towards 2024, we are planning to develop and extend the service we offer through group programmes, continued alliances and close collaboration with other community agencies.

I value the trust and support I receive from the My Project team and from the Board of Management in my role as Project Manager. It is my honour work within such a skilled and considerate team and I look forward to leading and developing our services for the families within our community into 2024.



Nuala McKenna  
Project Manager

## OUR PURPOSE

My Project... Minding You (MyP) is a family support service located within the community in the Monkstown / Mounttown area of Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin.

We provide supports to families within the community with the focus on promoting strengths together with coping, relational, emotional and social skills. We strive to support positive change and improved outcomes in the lives of children, young people and their parents / guardians who experience life challenges.

Effective interventions and committed responses to the individual needs of children and young people, together with professional guidance and supports for parents and guardians, can offer the opportunity for a family to function together more successfully and for the individuals within that family to thrive. MyP advocates strongly for children, young people and families in our community through our engagement with other local support services and our association with statutory bodies.



## OUR VISION

Our vision is for a community where children, young people and families can realise their full potential, are equipped to overcome personal challenges and have the opportunity to belong to and contribute to a prosperous and inclusive society.



## OUR MISSION

Our mission, through diverse programmes, is to encourage the formation of positive relationships, promote personal development and cultivate the emotional wellbeing of our clients, thereby enabling them to realise their full potential and enjoy a purposeful place in the community. This support is provided in a caring, friendly and safe environment.

## OUR VALUES

**Respect** for all service users and those in the wider community. This is our key value that guides everything that we do. Our services seek to empower individuals to enhance their lives while treating them with dignity at all times.

**Integrity** honesty and highest ethical behaviour and standards when we engage with our stakeholders in an open and transparent manner, respecting their privacy and observing complete confidentiality at all times.

**Compassion** striving to ensure that in all our interventions, we demonstrate empathy whilst listening in a non-judgemental way.

**Collaboration** cooperatively working in partnership with all stakeholders including families and support agencies to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people.

**Advocacy** supporting and encouraging children and young people to find and develop their own voice and open mind by seeking to understand their needs through clear and effective communication.



## OUR IMPACT 2023

Over 1,250 One to One sessions in 2023

64

Children & Young People participated in 1:1 sessions

32

Children & Young People were experiencing Hidden Harm

26

Parents & Guardians participated in 1:1 sessions

9

Parents / Guardians participated in NVR Parenting Programme

32

Parents & Babies participated in Peep+ Parenting Early Education Programme

47

Children participated in the Roots of Empathy Programme

11

Children participated in group Theraplay

5

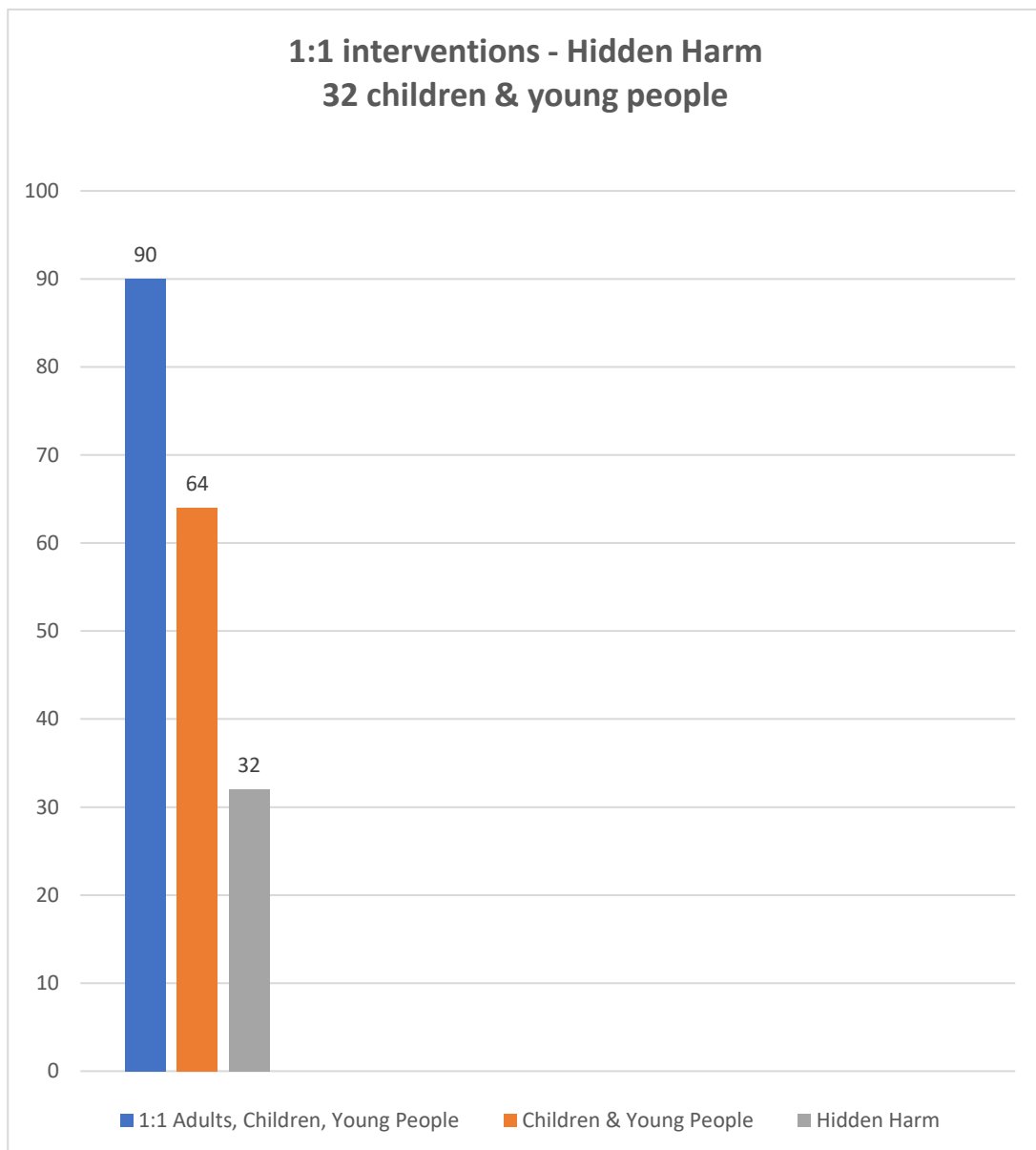
Families participated in the Meitheal process

8

Young people participated in Substance Misuse Aftercare Programme

10

Young People participated in 1:1 support around substance misuse



Hidden Harm refers to the experience of children living with and impacted by parental problem alcohol and other drug use. A range of difficulties can be experienced including enduring stress and living in an unpredictable home environment which has the potential to affect children & young people for life.

In 2023, 90 adults, children and young people received 1:1 support from MyP. Of these, 64 were children and young people, of which 32 (50%) were experiencing difficulties in relation to hidden harm.



## SERVICES PROVIDED IN 2023

### **Individual support to children, young people and families**

This is a process based on personal interaction and positive relationships to support a young person in developing personal strengths and skills. One to one interventions aim to encourage the growth of individual competencies in order to improve overall wellbeing and to reinforce positive mental health. Increased personal capacity can support the young person in addressing and resolving unhelpful behaviours, thoughts and beliefs, increasing recognition and management of feelings, relationships and social skills.

Central to our intervention process is active engagement and dedicated encouragement towards growth of positive regard for self, relationships and the community. Personal awareness, development and the cultivation of healthier emotional wellbeing promotes the potential for more positive relationships within the family and within the wider community.

Our supports are based on the needs of the individual and are discussed and agreed with that person and their family. In 2023, 90 children, young people, parents and guardians accessed individual support at MyP with a total of 212 people accessing supports through either individual support or group-based programmes over the course of the year.





Our Peep+ Learning Together Groups are facilitated weekly in two locations; Mounttown and Shankill and are run in collaboration with Southside partnership. The programme supports parents in building positive relationships with their children through play and fun learning activities and helps parents and carers to make the most of the learning opportunities in everyday life, supporting babies' and young children's learning through play. The Peep+ Programme values and extends what parents and carers already do to support their child's learning and development. Peep+ is a strengths-based approach to working with families, focusing on doing *with* rather than doing *to* parents,

With a focus on bonding and attachment, the groups provide support for parents experiencing a variety of difficulties. For example, a parent may be parenting alone, accessing mental health services, have low income, and may be parenting babies and children with additional needs. They may be managing substance misuse, conflict / violence within the home with little to no family support.

## MEITHEAL PROCESS



My Project supports the Meitheal Early Intervention Process in collaboration with the Child & Family Support Network Co-ordinator at Tusla. The process is designed to ensure that the strengths and needs of children and their families are effectively identified, understood and responded to in an effective way. It is tailored to the needs of the individual child or young person, is a voluntary process and can be carried out when the parent or carer agrees to the process.

Meitheal is used in partnership with parents to help them share their own knowledge, expertise, and concerns about their child and to hear the views of practitioners working with them. The ultimate goal is to enable parents and practitioners to work together to achieve desired outcomes for the child.



## **Roots of Empathy**

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## **Racines de l'empathie**

Roots of Empathy is an evidence-based programme that is delivered in primary school classrooms. The programme has shown significant results in reducing levels of aggression and bullying among school children by increasing empathy, raising social-emotional competence and increasing prosocial behaviours

An essential aspect of the programme involves a parent and child visiting the classroom every three weeks with a trained Roots of Empathy instructor coaching the children to observe the baby's development and to understand, identify and name the baby's feelings. The baby is the 'tiny teacher' in this engaged learning, while the instructor helps the children identify and reflect on their own feelings and the feelings of others.

The Roots of Empathy instructor visits before and after each family visit to prepare and reinforce the learning using a specialised plan for each visit. Throughout the programme, the children are witness to the importance of a secure attachment relationship between baby and parent – the first and most powerful model of empathy

## AFTERCARE GROUP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE – SUBSTANCE MISUSE



My Project collaborated with DLR Community Addiction Team (DLR CAT) and Youth Drug & Alcohol Service (YoDA) to facilitate weekly recovery sessions, providing support to young people in early recovery. Consistent supports, particularly in the early stages of recovery, help young people to remain focussed and engaged in their recovery plan, reducing the risk of relapse, promoting routine and guidance towards new interests as they work towards life goals.

One to one interventions, group work and social experiences following the community reinforcement and pro social approach help young people build on their strengths and foster mechanisms to manage regulation and to cope with triggers, challenges, stress and cravings that they experience in their recovery journey.

## SUMMER SOCIAL GROUP

The team collaborated with young people receiving 1:1 supports at MyP and proposed for young people to come together as a group over the Summer. With support from the MyP team, the young people worked with each other to discuss ideas, to research and to plan a programme that they could look forward to and benefit from over the Summer months.

Young people got the opportunity to connect regularly with each other and to try out new skills and experiences such as bowling, sailing, cooking, baking, creative projects, games tournaments, jump zone and tackling climbing walls. The planning process, together with the level of individual engagement proved very successful. The young people reported that they very much enjoyed spending time with each other, building on existing and new connections, developing positive communications, living skills and social skills while trying out new and challenging experiences.



## **PARTNERSHIPS**

We represent and advocate for the families we work with through the greater DLR Community Network:

Each member of the MyP team represents and supports the interests of My Project through collaborative meetings with Children & Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) / Prevention, Partnership & Family Support Programme (PPFS Tusla) subgroup, CYPSC Physical & Mental Health sub-group, CYPSC Parental Support sub-group, Youth at Risk sub-group, SAVE (Southside Addressing Violence Effectively), Hub Managers (Tusla DSE / Wicklow area), DLR Drug & Alcohol Task Force (DATF )Treatment & Rehab sub-group, DLR DATF Youth substance prevention subgroup, NVR Promotion / Mentor Working Group

We work closely with other services in the community, e.g. - Tusla Child & Family Agency, DLR DATF, Drug & Alcohol Support Services, Mental Health Services, Primary Care, Community GP's, Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, Early Years and Further Education Providers. My Project values opportunities to work in partnership with other organisations as effective collaboration results in a more 'whole family' approach to identifying and meeting the needs of families and the individuals within those families. A collaborative approach increases our reach and reduces the pressure on individual services when working together on programmes such as Peep+ and NVR Parenting Programmes.

Subgroups meet regularly with attending members developing positive working relationships and strong connections among services. This personal and comprehensive forum allows for the sharing of knowledge, the sharing of resources and the implementation of new ideas for our continuing partnerships.

## **DLR LETS PARENT WEBSITE LAUNCH NOVEMBER 2023**

We are very pleased to be associated with the DLR Let's Parent Website, an initiative of The Children & Young Person's Services Committees (DLR CYPSC), launched in November 2023. Parent's in the DLR area are signposted to connect with the supports that are right for their family and the website is proudly hosted by My Project.

The DLR Let's Parent website is the place to go for any parent, at any stage of their child's development, and with any need they may have, to find out what supports are available and where they can get support in their local DLR area.



**Photo: Launch of DLR Let's Parent Website at Airfield Estate, Dundrum, 20<sup>th</sup> Nov 2023**



## OUR FUNDERS

Tusla Child & Family Agency and the HSE, through DLR Drug & Alcohol Task Force, (DLR DATF), provide the core funding for the services provided to families in the community by My Project. Our Tusla funding comes through the Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Programme (PPFS) which supports the implementation of a broad collection of early intervention and preventative services in collaboration with community support agencies such as My Project.

The programme aims to prevent risks arising and / or to address already occurring risks that may have escalated for children and young people through early intervention and family support. This process focuses on collaborating, building on strengths, increasing individual and familial coping mechanisms and promoting sustainable capacity towards overall recovery and positive outcomes.



Our funding from the HSE comes through the DLR DATF and enables MyP to provide interventions and supports for young people who may be engaged in, or at risk of engaging in substance misuse. This funding also supports our work around Hidden Harm, where children have been / are being impacted by parental drug or alcohol use. A child or young person may face challenges to their physical, cognitive, social and emotional development when a parents capacity to parent is compromised through substance misuse.

The process to supporting a family experiencing the effects of substance misuse and hidden harm is essentially, a 'whole family' approach as it is essential to determine the needs of the individual within the family. A collaborative approach between the family and supportive services can support both the parents and the children in building individual strengths, increasing capacity and helping to build / rebuild relationships within the family and engagement within the wider community.

This funding also supports My Project in providing services to young people who show specific risks of current or potential substance misuse. One to one interventions or small group processes aim to connect, inform and educate and allow the team to work with young people to build capacity around harm reduction and to support towards recovery.



Additional funding was awarded to My Project from HSE Lottery Funding this year. The team collaborated with young people receiving supports from MyP and facilitated group activities throughout the Summer. These activities brought young people together and feedback has been very positive from those who took part. They agreed that the group was fun and something that they looked forward to, that they liked being able to get to know everybody and to make new friends in the group.

Additional feedback from the group included: “It took my mind off some stuff”, “Got me out of the house and doing something productive”, “It’s nice to get a break and hang out with your friends”, “They’re all just nice”, “(it was nice) Being able to relax and be yourself around other people”. Research shows that engaging in a social group benefits general wellbeing, that it boosts physical, mental and emotional health while providing a multitude of challenges and learning opportunities that increase core strengths, self esteem and build resilience.

We are very grateful to our funders for their continuing support and for their ongoing trust and confidence in our service. Their funding allows us to provide a consistent, effective service together with critical interventions for families in our community.



## OUR PEOPLE

**Eoin McNulty** - *Project Worker*

**Marie Sheridan** - *Project Worker*

**Jane O'Doherty** - *Project Worker*

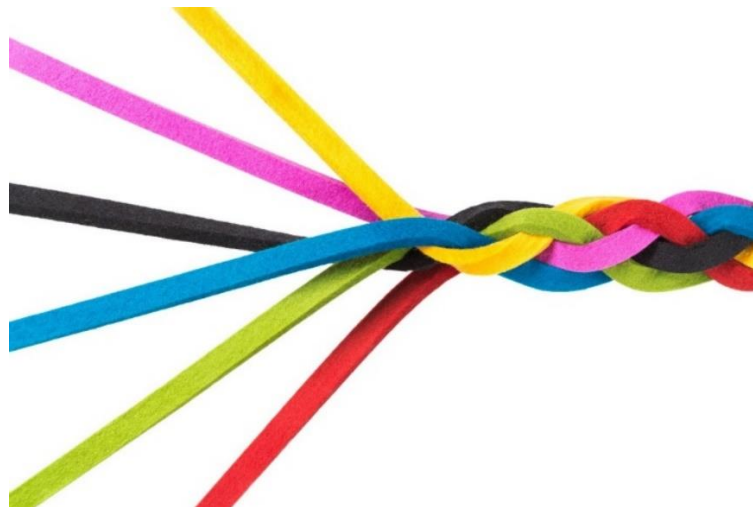
**Jess Kelly** - *Project Worker*

**Clare Shine** - *Administrator*

**Nuala McKenna** - *Project Manager*

Our team share a wealth of experience and skills, with qualifications in a variety of disciplines including social care, early childcare and education, youth and community development, addiction, holistic psychotherapy, theraplay, training and education, finance and administration.

We are collaborative in our approach and continuously support each other as we endeavour to provide the best possible support and guidance to the families in our care.



## TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT IN 2023

- **ASIST**

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training prepares practitioners to reduce the immediate risk of a suicide and increase the support for a person at risk. It helps them seek a shared understanding of the reasons for suicide and reasons for living. ASIST training supports the recognition of invitations for help, reach out and offer support, review the risk of suicide, work with persons at risk to develop a safeplan and link with community resources.

- **CRA**

The Community Reinforcement Approach (CRA) is a comprehensive behavioural programme for treating substance misuse. CRA is based on the belief that one's environment plays a major role in determining whether an individual will misuse alcohol and / or drugs. As such, it teaches individuals how to examine the triggers and the consequences (positive and negative) for drug use, and to utilise community (i.e., familial, social, recreational, and occupational) reinforcers to support change in an individual's substance using behaviours. Ultimately, the goal is to rearrange environmental contingencies such that sober behaviour becomes more rewarding than substance misusing behaviour.

- **aCRA**

Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach (A-CRA) is a variation of the adult CRA model which was adapted to be developmentally appropriate for adolescents. This approach includes sessions for parents or significant caregivers in order to increase supports and to improve or increase access to social, familial, and educational/vocational reinforcers. Overall, this approach works to assist young people with learning how to lead an enjoyable and healthy life without using alcohol or other drugs.

- **Decider Skills**

The Decider Skills use Cognitive Behaviour Therapy to teach children, young people and adults the skills to recognise and manage their own thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Complex psychological theory has been distilled into highly effective, evidence based skills which can support the development of self awareness together with more effective recognition and management of feelings and behaviour. Decider skills are taught in a fun and interactive way, building resilience and effective coping strategies to support positive mental health.

- **Non Violent Resistance Parenting Programme**

NVR teaches parents new and effective ways to respond to their children who may behave in a challenging or aggressive way. We teach parents and guardians to develop a safe, calm and authoritative presence. As parents change their reactions to the children's behaviours, so their children's behaviours change in response.

## **AIMS FOR 2024**

- Supporting Children - Working together with families through evidence based and supportive approaches in order to promote safe and nurturing homes where children can feel protected and can learn, grow and thrive with positive connection to their family, community and culture.
- Supporting Young People - Actively engaging with and encouraging young people to recognise their own strengths and capabilities, to build capacity to think autonomously, to manage challenges, make informed decisions, learn to be personally responsible and transition to a greater level of progressive independence.
- Supporting Parents & Guardians – Working together with parents in a safe, supported environment. To support a parent in feeling heard and understood, to support increased capacity within their parenting role, to utilise and build on existing strengths

to bring about more positive connections and supportive relationships within their family.

- We believe that building strong and positive relationships with families, the wider community, other professional services and all stakeholders are crucial to My Project providing appropriate and effective support to those who need it. Our goal is to maintain healthy relationships, to continue to focus on a concerted and collaborative approach to child and family support and to maintain our active contribution to the overall wellbeing of families in our community.

## **PROGRAMME PLANNING FOR 2024**

### **Circle of Security Parenting Programme**

The Circle of Security Parenting Programme (COSP) is based on decades of research about how secure parent-child relationships can be supported and strengthened. Using the COSP model, parents can come to better understand their child's emotional world by learning to read emotional needs, support their child's ability to successfully manage emotions, enhance the development of their child's self esteem and honour the innate wisdom and desire for their child to feel secure.

### **NVR**

The Non Violent Resistance Programme is a response to child to parent conflict, violence and abuse. The process supports parents to change the ways in which they deal with aggressive and controlling behaviours with a focus on increasing positive communication and improving relationships within the household.

### **aCRA**

The Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach is a behavioural treatment for young people engaged in substance misuse and it's associated difficulties. The process aims to increase positive aspects of the young persons life such as family, social aspects and activities

that support recovery and to reduce the negative aspects such as substance use reinforcers that hinder recovery.

### **Group Theraplay**

Theraplay is used for building self-esteem, trust in others, enhancing attachment and happy engagement with others. The approach is playful and works through the use of games, developmentally challenging activities, and tender, nurturing activities. The very act of engaging in this way helps to regulate the child's behaviour and helps the child feel secure, cared for, connected and worthy.

### **Roots of Empathy**

The Roots of Empathy Programme works towards building a caring, peaceful and civil society through the development of empathy in children and adults. The aim is to increase empathy, reduce aggression and levels of bullying and, in essence, to change the world, child by child. The Roots of Empathy programme is based on evidence that empathy can be taught and learned, and that empathy is foundational and essential to helping children navigate relationships, form connections and be inclusive of others.

### **Decider Skills**

Traditionally, mental health has received reactive treatment. The Decider Skills Programme has been designed to enable participants to make changes within themselves, to help regulate emotion, to manage distress, , increase mindfulness and effective communication. The skills are delivered in an effective, fun, and creative style that makes them easy to learn and teach.

## TEAM TRAINING GOALS FOR 2024

- Addiction Studies
- Restorative Practice
- Reflective Practice
- aCRA
- Circle of Security
- NVR
- PEEP+
- Lead Your Life
- Narrative 4
- Real U
- Roots of Empathy

## GOVERNANCE

MyP is dedicated to being open and transparent in the way the service operates. The Project Manager, the Team and the Board of Management work together to ensure appropriate processes are in place that consistently monitor and evaluate how we, the charity, operates. Good governance relates to consistency of management, cohesive policies and procedures, essential elements that are vital to the oversight and effective running of our service. Good governance supports us in protecting our service as we continue to meet the current and emerging needs of families within the community.

My Project Minding You is fully compliant with the standards as defined in the Charities Governance Code. Our aim is to use the guidance as set out in the code as the minimum standard to apply, to enable us to deliver our service in an effective manner.



## DIRECTORS REPORT

My Project Minding You (MyP) is a company limited by guarantee and governed by a constitution. The company has charitable status under sections 207 and 208 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997.

MyP is supported by a voluntary Board of Management. The non-executive Directors collectively provide a varied range of skills, knowledge and experience that supports the management and team at My Project. The Board held six meetings plus an AGM during 2023.

The Board of Management delegates the day to day running of the service to the Project Manager and the team at MyP. No member of the Board received payment or reimbursement of expenses for 2023.

We are very grateful to all members of the board for giving freely of their time and expertise to guide the project in all matters of governance, finance, oversight and strategy. We appreciate their continued commitment and solid input as we look forward to their ongoing support in 2024.



## **BOARD MEMBERS 2023**

There were no changes to the Board during the year. Board members worked closely with the project manager to prepare and review MyP's Strategic Plan,

**Jacky Flavin Tehan**

Chairperson

**Cathal O'Neil**

Company Secretary

**Barry Quinn**

Director

**Andre Almeida**

Director

**Leslie O'Hora**

Director

**Sinead O'Rourke**

Board Observer

## **ACCOUNT RECORDS**

The Board of Management confirms that the accounting records of MYP comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2014.

A comprehensive financial controls policy is in place, with detailed finance reports regularly prepared, reviewed and circulated to the Board throughout the year. Annual audited accounts are prepared and filed with the Companies Registration Office and with the Charities Regulator.

## **GOING CONCERN**

Based on the results for the year, the year-end position and the approved 2024 budget, the Board of Directors believes that My Project has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

## **DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION**

The directors who held office at the date of approval of this Directors' Report confirm that as far as they are each aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the Company's auditor is unaware and each director has taken all the steps that he/she ought to have taken as a director to make himself/herself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the Company's auditor is aware of that information.

## **AUDITOR**

Bourke & Co (Greg O'Shea), Chartered Accountants have expressed their willingness to remain in office for 2024.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

The team at My Project work with children, young people and their parents or carers, taking on a low to medium level of risk in core activities. Risks are reviewed on a regular basis and are discussed with the Board of Management with steps being implemented to reduce identified risks wherever necessary.

All staff and Volunteers are Garda vetted. My project has a Child Protection Policy based on the Children First Act 2015 and pursues best practice recruitment policies and procedures.

