

**Liz Lennon – November 14 2014 speech launching report
“ St Stephen’s Green Trust Survivors Grant Programme 2012 – 2014 Results,
Reflection and Learning from a 3 year process. October 2014.”**

Good afternoon everyone.

The document that’s being launched today isn’t just the story of how 5 projects and their funding organisation worked together over 3 years.

It’s a story about the real results of collaboration, patience and persistence in the face of a changing funding and policy landscape.

It’s the story of real solidarity with survivors of Irish religious institutional abuse living in Ireland and the UK.

My part in this story is a small one.

I was evaluator of the programme from 2013 until now. Mary Higgins preceded me as evaluator before becoming the CEO of Caranua.

The evaluation process was more than just gathering qualitative and quantitative data - although we did that very successfully.

The process was a truly collaborative learning experience for everyone involved.

One of the key learning and transformation elements were the twice yearly gatherings of all the projects for a day. Before the day everyone was sent each others evaluation forms so that they could truly learn from each other.

These days became the foundation where people learnt about each others highlights, challenges, project changes and discussed the broader funding and policy environment. The group also teased out elements of good practice as well as the changes that were happening in survivors lives as a result of their work together.

These learning spaces built trust between the organisations in a sector that is known for its divisiveness. Organisations promoted each others work and supported each other in exploring ways to meet the challenges that always arise.

As an evaluator I am often asked

“ What’s the value of this programme? Tell me the results? Did it have an impact? Did we get a return on our investment and funding?”

There's a whole paper on how we need to explore our definitions of value but for the sake of this programme I will say that there was huge value provided by each programme for the funding provided.

Let me tell you about value.

There were 6 organisations funded by St Stephen's Green Trust to develop 5 projects over 3 years. Funding was guaranteed on the basis of successful evaluations against their set objectives and participation in the 2 yearly network meetings.

Each project has had a positive and sustained impact on the survivors they have worked with and the projects will all be continuing in some form into the future.

Some of the impacts on survivors lives included:

- **Being able** to make informed decisions about their lives and rights to support because of information that was provided by projects
- **Survivor inclusion in decisions about their future** was a key element in the success of each project. All organisations placed a strong value on working in solidarity with survivors
- **Increased feelings of well being by survivors** were reported by those projects focused on delivery of meaningful activity programmes and peer support groups.
- **Social events** run by a number of projects decreased feelings of isolation, built trust, were fun and provided a safe and respectful space for people with similar shared experiences to meet. The psycho social benefits of these activities are often underestimated by funders and policy makers.
- **Connection with other survivors** through support groups and informal activities gave people a chance to not only understand shared experiences but also see different ways that people choose to build their lives.
- **Campaigning with and on behalf of survivors** has made a real difference in individuals confidence and perception of themselves.
- **Involvement in mainstream activities and services** gave people a sense of self beyond the label of survivor.
- **Awareness training of professionals working with survivors** has real potential to increase professionals confidence and capacity to provide a sensitive service.
- **Having a safe and welcoming space** to meet had a positive impact on survivors.

I'd like to give you a short glimpse into each project, its story and impact. You can read the details of each projects story, challenges, learning and future in the document.

Depaul Ireland - Sundial House Life Skills Programme

Depaul Ireland was established in 2002 with a mission to offer homeless and disadvantaged people the opportunity to fulfil their potential and make positive and informed choices about their future. They provide 15 specialised services between Dublin, Belfast, Dungannon and Derry.

Sundial House in Dublin was the funded project and is a specialised long term accommodation service for 30 vulnerable men, women and couples who have entrenched alcohol use issues, and a history of extended periods of rough sleeping and long term homelessness. It is a low threshold /harm reduction service.

The Life skills project supported both the survivor group of 8 men, and the resident population as a whole, through a range of holistic interventions, provided by a team of volunteers and student placements. Activities included a breakfast club where residents worked together to make breakfast; a bread baking club; outings; a holistic healing programme; gardening; art and woodwork classes; and a theatre programme. This work was also integrated into the broader keyworking and case management approach of Depaul Ireland that includes alcohol management planning.

The programme was driven by a core of 16 volunteers who were supported by the Life Skills coordinator.

There were over a dozen positive impacts of the programme that are detailed in the document. Residents have self reported feeling more positive, resilient and able to deal with difficulties. Staff and volunteers have noted that Sundial House has a calmer atmosphere and residents drinking has decreased.

The staff, volunteers and residents all believe that the Life Skills programme has made a strong and positive difference in their lives.

As one resident said when asked how he'd feel if the programme was stopped

'' I'd be devastated – I mean that! ''

The Depaul project is an excellent example of a successful programme that is mainstream and also includes and is sensitive to the needs of survivors.

Currently a case study on the project is being funded by Depaul Ireland to share within the organisation and with other groups. Depaul is also looking for further resourcing to continue the programme in Sundial and explore expanding it to other services within the organisation.

The key people involved in the project included - Dee Higgins; Lee Casey and Katja Debeniak

icap [immigrant counselling and psychotherapy] and london irish centre.

The aim of the project was to improve the sensitivity and appropriateness with which disclosures of abuse by survivors of Institutional abuse were received by professionals such as care workers, advice workers, social workers, housing and health workers. in the UK and Ireland.

icap and LIC developed 2 key outputs - a 2 day sensitive practice training programme and an e handbook on sensitive practice when working with survivors of institutional abuse. The training and the handbook were developed in consultation with a group of survivors and working professionals.

The training was run a number of times in the UK and Ireland with very positive responses from participants regarding an increase in their awareness and knowledge regarding sensitive practice when working with survivors.

A recent participant commented

"The course was incredibly helpful. Most of all it has helped me be mindful of my interactions, actions and reactions when working with survivors".

The e handbook is now available on the icap site. The Irish in Britain project has the handbook on its site and the Depaul project used it to help inform workers and volunteers.

The future of the training, its direction and resourcing forms part of a deep level evaluation that icap is currently conducting. icap is also in talks with the UK College of Social Work for a roundtable event which will draw together lessons learned from experiences in working with survivors of institutional childhood abuse in the UK and Ireland.

The key people involved in this project changed over time and included - London Irish Centre – Jeff Moore [2012], Jenny Dunne [2013 – Aug 2014] icap – Christine Thornton [2012 – early 2014], Geraldine Ryan and Catherine Hennessy Trainers: Mary Hughes and Jeff Moore

Irish Women Survivors Support Network IWSSN - UK

Until the IWSSN received funding from St Stephen's Green Trust they had been volunteer run.

The organisation provides a frontline advice and support service to survivors and their families.

Over the 3 years of their funding they have worked with hundreds of survivors 1 to 1 including home visits. They also organise a number of social events as well

as information meetings for survivors. Last year they successfully gained funding to open the Whispering Hope Centre and employ 4 workers. They have worked tirelessly over many years and supported more than 70 Magdalene Laundry women in their struggle to receive recognition and compensation. In 2014 they have also worked with hundreds of survivors to help them complete funding forms to Caranua while they continue their core service of working with survivors.

The IWSSN was and is a small organisation. It can be very challenging trying to deliver services when you don't have the back up that exists in larger organisations. Over the last 3 years it has worked hard to build its organisational capacity and has reviewed and developed a range of policies and practices. This will enable it to have a stronger foundation to deliver its services.

Since the opening of the Whispering Hope Centre the organisation has started a range of learning and well being programmes that run throughout the week.

The two key people in this project are Phyllis Morgan and Sally Mulready

Irish Survivors in Britain - Irish in Britain

Irish in Britain represents over 100 organisations all run by and for the Irish community.

The Irish Survivors in Britain project had a number of strands:

1. to establish a number of survivor self help/support groups
2. form a network of organisations that work with survivors
3. set up a website with specific information for survivors

A part time worker coordinated the project over the 3 years.

Establishing support groups has a range of challenges and often needs a number of factors to coalesce for success:

1. active interest and participation by survivors
2. a good venue to meet
3. local support by at least one professional or organisation
4. facilitation support

The project successfully started a survivor group in Leicester who meet regularly and were recently successful in gaining lotteries funding to fund facilitation and activities through 2015.

The network of organisations was formed and successfully worked together to help inform and design the website in the early years of the project. It now works on a more informal basis.

The website was designed in consultation with survivors and receives thousands of visitors a year. One of the interesting functions is the Stay in Touch feature that survivors can use to ask for information and they receive an e newsletter. Nearly 200 people used this feature.

The site is now housed on the front page of the Irish in Britain site and they have committed resources to keeping it up to date.

The key person in this project was Helen White.

Right of Place Second Chance - Ireland

Right of Place Second Chance provides a range of services to survivors in Ireland. They have 3 regional offices supported by a head office in Cork.

The SSGT funded project had a number of strands;

1. To promote knowledge sharing
2. To promote needs of survivors
3. To integrate survivors through social events
4. To conduct an organisational review and develop a strategic plan

Right of Place, like the IWSSN is a front line service that works directly with survivors.

Over the 3 years they successfully met and in some cases exceeded their objectives.

Using the SSGT funding they:

1. opened a drop in centre in Waterford that has become a safe and welcoming space for survivors and has resulted in a tripling of enquiries to the Waterford office
2. created and distributed a number of newsletters each year to survivors and organisations to keep them informed of services and developments
3. conducted an organisational audit that has resulted in a Health Check document as well as the development of new policies and procedures
4. developed a strategic plan to be launched in December

An additional activity by Right of Place as part of the development of its strategic plan was to conduct a survey of over 100 survivors who use their service. This provided much needed qualitative and quantitative data on survivors needs and perception of services and will be launched in December.

Right of Place has also assisted over 500 survivors with application and information support for Caranua funding.

One of the critical challenges for Right of Place as it builds its organisational capacity and strategic focus is that demand for their services has increased significantly as their funding from the HSE has decreased each year and ceased from the Dept of Education.

Key coordinator of this project was Micheal Walsh

This now leads me to the broader funding and policy landscape in Ireland and the UK and the impact it has had on these organisations and the survivors they work with. I want to emphasise that these elements and concerns came directly from discussions with the 5 projects involved in this process.

Ageing survivor profile - Survivors are ageing and their housing and support issues need to have an end of life focus. Survivors have indicated a real fear of going into nursing homes and hospitals as a result of their abusive experiences as children in religious institutions. This fear coupled with a perceived lack of awareness of sensitive practice when working with survivors of institutional abuse by state agencies is a matter of concern.

This is an issue that requires further research and discussion by all key organisations involved in policy, funding and service delivery to survivors and must include engagement with survivors.

Mainstream organisations lack of awareness of sensitive practice when working with survivors is an acknowledged issue. The demand for the icap training shows that there is a willingness by workers to increase their capacity and confidence when working with survivors. The challenge will be to develop a process that has the capacity, scale and scope to meet this demand in both the UK and Ireland.

Decreased funding and increased demand by survivors for support is a critical issue - When the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund (RISF), now Caranua, was formed the Irish government withdrew funding to several UK and Irish survivor support services. This has resulted in an increased demand on the remaining survivor support services in the UK and Ireland in terms of both general enquiries and providing direct support to individuals to complete Caranua application forms.

There seems to be an erroneous perception by some state agencies that peer led survivor organisations will now be supported by Caranua. This is not their function.

Funding to survivors organisations by state agencies is still needed and should be based on capacity to deliver and support for building organisational competence and governance.

The survivor organisations funded by the SSGT showed a willingness and diligence to review and build their organisational competence and governance in the face of decreased funding and increased survivor demand. This needs to be recognised and supported by key state agencies in Ireland and the UK .

A difficult sector but collaboration and cooperation is possible – the SSGT networking, evaluation and support process provided real benefits in terms of collaboration and cooperation between all the projects. In a sector that is perceived as problematic [and what sector isn't?] the organisations modelled an approach that saw them share information, policies, practice as well as clearly present issues of concern regarding survivors to relevant bodies.

The positive value of psychosocial activities on survivors quality of life is not recognised by funders - While the practice of developing peer support groups, life skills programmes and social events for survivors as a 'step down' from long term one-to-one counselling is often applauded by state agencies, they are not valued or recognised within a social policy or funding context.

The peer support groups, life skills programme and social activities established and run by 4 of the 5 projects show significant psycho social benefits for survivors.

Funding for group and peer led activities and networks needs to be placed into a clearer funding context by state agencies in the UK and Ireland.

Now - It isn't often that a funder receives accolades from its recipients.

In the final evaluation I asked projects to comment on SSGT and the funding process that they had put in place over the 3 years. I won't read out all their comments but here's one

'' there are two kinds of funders. What we call Cash Point funders who just give you the money and wait for a report, and Funder Plus where the funder is committed to working with fundees to learn and progress. St Stephen's Green Trust is a Funder Plus.''

I believe that St Stephen's Green Trust raised the bar in terms of good practice in a range of ways that are detailed in the report.

I'd like to give you a brief sense of the elements of good practice I witnessed during this funding process.

St Stephen's Green Trust chooses to focus and fund organisations working with people that are often unseen or deemed 'too hard' to work with or fund. Their funding programmes are research based and driven by the core issues that impact on people's lives.

This funding programme arose as a result of the 2009 Ryan Report and subsequent research commissioned by the SSGT and conducted by Mary Higgins. Funding was provided by Porticus and Daughters of the Cross.

Providing funding over a 3 year period enables both the funder and organisations to really learn what works [and doesn't] and adapt focus and delivery throughout that time.

The funding was supported by an evaluation and learning process that helped everyone reflect, focus and plan the next phase and direction of their work.

As a funder, SSGT has a strong understanding of project developmental processes and this became clear as they worked with each organisation and initiated adaptive responses as challenges and opportunities arose. They were very process focused while still maintaining a watch on delivery of objectives. While SSGT has a process based learning approach it also holds all its funded projects financially accountable for funds.

SSGT has a commitment to sharing the story of this funding programme so that other organisations can learn from the process. This report is the result of that commitment and will be distributed widely.

St Stephen's Green Trust makes a little go a long way and this funding programme has made a real difference in many survivors lives.

Congratulations to the trustees for their ongoing commitment to this work.

It has been a great pleasure working with the funded organisations and I applaud their professional and heartfelt solidarity with the people they serve.

And finally, I want to specifically thank Orla O'Neill. She works with an integrity and commitment that is truly amazing.

Thank you.