

**IMPROVING LOCAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURES AND
PROGRAMMES
REPORT FROM WCDRC LTD TO GALWAY CITY DEVELOPMENT BOARD
SEPTEMBER 2004**

The following information is presented for the purposes of inclusion in a joint response to the Department of Environment in relation to the Galway City Development Board's submission for Improving Local and Community Development Structures and Programmes.

Background

The WCDRC Ltd. is a non-profit company limited by guarantee. It was established to operate the core Community Development Project funded by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. A voluntary management committee drawn from local residents and those working locally manages the project. A Project Coordinator and an Administrator are employed to support the overall project.

The project manages two additional projects:

The Community Development Resource Centre Building
The Westside Family Resource Centre Creche and Pre-school

The WCDRC Ltd. employs a building supervisor, part-time receptionist and a part-time caretaker to support the operation of the Building.

The WCDRC Ltd. presently employs 3 full-time, 1 part-time and 2 temporary full-time staff in the Family Resource Centre. Over 75 children attend the services during the week. The services are partially funded by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme. Fees charged to families using the services and local fund-raising must cover remaining costs.

Organisational Aims & Objectives

WCDRC Ltd.

The Westside Community Development Resource Centre Ltd. is a community based coordinating group who aim to listen and respond to individuals and groups in our community and facilitate their development. We acknowledge and respect the work of the other groups in our community.

We aim:

- To provide accessible, open and welcoming resources to all
- To promote the positive development of the Westside in accordance with Community Development principles and methods

- To involve local people in the design and implementation of programmes which will cater for their social needs and alleviate some of the effects of disadvantage
- To identify and attempt to bring about needed change in the existing policies, structures, services and attitudes as they affect the lives of the people of the Westside
- To create a greater awareness of the nature, extent and causes of poverty in the area

Our objectives are:

- To support community groups, projects and individuals in the area and to encourage co-ordination and communication
- To encourage and enable more people throughout the community to become involved according to their needs and interests
- To set up new initiatives in meeting gaps between existing provision and the needs of the community

Westside Family Resource Centre

We aim to work in liaison with parents, statutory and voluntary providers of family support services in the area to:

- Work with local families to identify what services and holistic supports are needed locally; promote what is available and lobby for the services/supports needed.
- Promote, provide and expand accessible, high-quality and affordable childcare facilities
- Promote equality of ability and choice for our community's children and their families
- Work with others to coordinate the provision of sustainable childcare facilities for the area
- Support the development of parents' skills and knowledge, recognise their different needs and experiences and work them in an equal and effective way
- Create awareness that investing in children and families, especially those most vulnerable, is investing in the community

Westside Childcare Services

We are committed to providing support for families in the Westside area through the provision of quality childcare for children aged 3 months to 5 years in a safe and secure environment. We promote equality for all people, irrespective of gender, race, ability or religion.

Sharing of Facilities: Community Resource Centre Building

The Resource Centre building operates under the terms of a 99-year lease from the Galway City Council (Galway Corporation). The WCDRC Ltd. receives no external funding for the operation of the facility. Therefore the costs of staffing, light/heat, maintenance, repairs, security, professional fees etc must be met by service charges to those using the building. We estimate that an average of 150 people a day access the building.

The WCDRC Ltd. is presently working to establish a separate legal/management structure for the operation of the building. We intend that the building will continue to operate as a community owned and led project. This project will be independent to but supported by the Community Development Project.

Long-term Users of the Building

All three projects managed by the WCDRC Ltd. occupy separate space in the Resource Centre and contribute to the costs of the operation of the building:

Current Tenants

The following organisations lease office space in the Resource Centre Building:

- Age Inclusion Project (Galway City Council)
- Local Employment Services Network-Westside (FAS)
- People with Disabilities Ireland
- Schizophrenia Ireland
- Public Health Nurses Clinics/Back to School Scheme (Western Health Board)
- Westside Family Support Services (Springboard Project) (Western Health Board)
- Westside Youth Action Project (Galway Youth Federation)

All the above tenants provide outreach services/supports to local residents in the Westside Area.

Following a review of the use of space within the building, the WCDRC Ltd. has increased the availability of long-term office space and is seeking/negotiating with potential occupants for three vacant offices.

Short-term users

Following the loan of 3 computers and a printer from the Galway City Partnership, the WCDRC Ltd. provides access to a computer room. The room is available to those who do not have access to computers or who are learning computer skills and need to practice. The facility is available at no charge to individual users. We have just established a volunteer support service that provides the assistance of a computer advisor for learners one morning per week at no charge.

The computer room is also available to groups for a nominal fee to use for training purposes. The computer facility is used by an average of 60 people a month. We are

presently seeking funding to upgrade the computers, printers and establish an Internet service.

Presently the following groups use the Computer Room on a weekly basis:

FUN Group
Voiceless Voice Editorial group
Galway Refugee Support group

The following groups book our meeting rooms/board rooms on a weekly or twice-weekly basis:

For Us Now Women's Group
Westside Men's Group
Galway Adult Literacy Group
The Young Mothers Support Group
The YAP After-schools Project
Cruinnui Mental Health Support Outreach Programme
Sliding Rock Drama Group
Newcastle Active Retirement Group

The following groups regularly book the facilities for meeting, training, and events or to provide services:

WHB Nutrition services
WHB Family Group Conferences
Western Region Community Development Childcare Network
Community Response to Violence Against Women Network
Galway Travellers Support Group
RAPID

Over 50 other organisations, groups have booked the rooms on a once-off basis.

The following administrative services are shared with local community/voluntary, statutory and other organisations on a not-for-profit basis:

Telephone/Reception
Security
Storage
Photocopying
Typing
Community Website (in development)
Information Board
Bookings for local training courses
Dissemination/circulation of brochures, notices, newsletters, info, promotional materials

Sharing of Facilities: Childcare Services

The space occupied by the Westside Family Resource Centre crèche and pre-school is available for booking to outside groups to provide independent childcare services after 3:30 p.m. The space has also been made available to other organisations for celebrations, events and training sessions.

The Childcare Services section provides placement opportunities for the students/participants of the following programmes:

NUIG Speech and Language Department
Galway City VTOS
FAS

Over the years the our Childcare Services have provided reserved places for referrals from the following agencies, groups and organisations which have included:

Waterside House
Westside Hostel
Western Health Board-Social Workers, PHN, etc.
Westside Family Support Services
Brothers of Charity