

# **DIVERSITY SLIGO ANNUAL REPORT 2018**



Globe House

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## Chairperson's Address

Diversity Sligo prides itself in its response to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees and in its nurturing of the efforts of its committee members, staff and volunteers.

Through regular contacts with the residents of Globe House, we can identify what is needed and we try to access funding and other resources which can help make their lives more meaningful and less stressful. We could not achieve our goals without working closely with many organisations, whether statutory, community or voluntary.

In the last year, we became a limited company and we employed our first member of staff. We undertook a strategic plan. New legislation was brought in to allow certain asylum seekers to work and study. This was a challenging year and I thank everyone for their patience and dedication to raise to the challenge.

The organisation has expanded in its outlook and has found new ways of working. We look forward to continuing to work with some of the most disadvantaged members of society. Some welcome changes have already taken place, others are necessary and we are trying to make them happen. We need further commitments from all services so that asylum seekers and refugees will not be forgotten.

We acknowledge with thanks the financial supports that we have received from all our funders over the years. We would not be able to operate without you.

We are particularly grateful to the Community Foundation for Ireland for giving us the idea of working on an annual report and for offering us financial support.

Thank you to all the volunteers, staff and committee members for all their efforts.

Thank you to all the asylum seekers, men, women and children and the refugees who have let us be part of their lives.

***Josette Newman***

***10 August 2018***

## Introduction and Context:

There are approximately 213 people living in Globe House, the direct provision centre for asylum seekers in Sligo. Figures vary slightly and at the time of writing, there are 36 children, 39 couples with children or single parents, 45 single women and 93 single men. Residents come from 40 different countries.

## Social Inclusion Analysis:

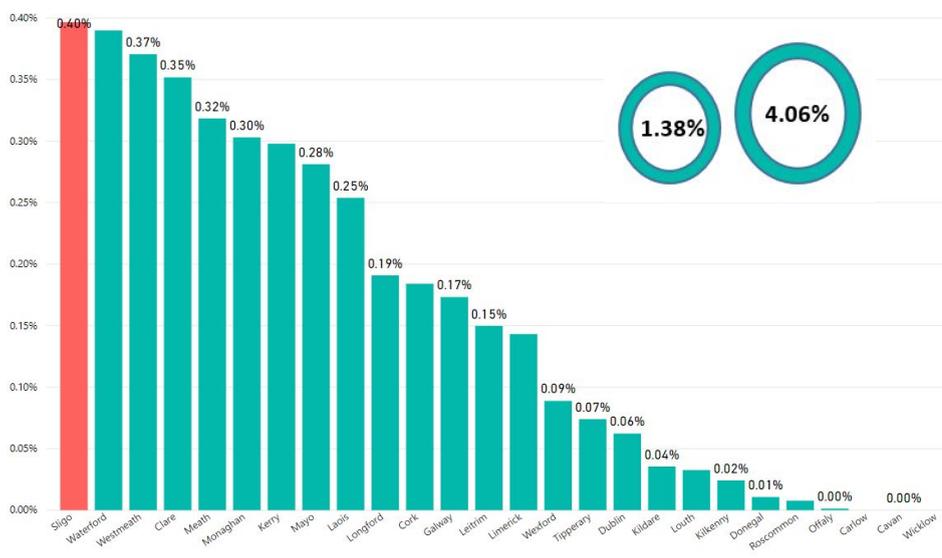
### Sligo Key Findings<sup>1</sup>



#### 1-Asylum Seekers & Refugees

*Higher than average proportion of this group : 1 from 26 counties*

- Sligo has the highest proportion of asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland – the average in each county is **0.13%** and in Sligo it's **0.40%**
- Sligo accounts for **1.38%** of the national population, whereas **4.06%** of all asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland live in Sligo



They receive board and lodging, € 21.60 per person per week, including children, a clothing allowance every 6 months, free legal aid if they wish, free transport to their legal aid solicitor, free transport to SPIRASI the Centre for the Victims of Torture, they have access to adult education, they may work under certain conditions or set up their own business. These new regulations were introduced in June of this year and we expect that the right to work and to study further will have a positive impact on the lives of the asylum seekers allowed to work. However, the right



<sup>1</sup> Calculations based on national population of 4,761,865. Sligo population of 65,535. SICAP 2015 – 2017 caseload of 110,044. Sligo SICAP caseload of 1,857.

restricted to asylum seekers who have been in the system for 9 months and have not yet received a decision on their case. Many asylum seekers are not in this category.

There are many challenges in an asylum seeker's life: they have fled situations of conflict in the past, have left their family and community behind, they are often traumatised, their present consists of a very restricted lifestyle and they look at their future with trepidation. They face the daily challenge of checking their post. They do not know from one day to the next if they will receive news that they are allowed to live in Ireland or if they will be asked to return to a country where they do not want to live, most of the time because of very negative living conditions there. Some face dangers. For many who are not allowed to work or who have to pay for education at levels 4, 5 and 6, life can be very boring. There is a high incidence of mental health issues with challenges in everyday life.

There are many refugees living in the Sligo community but no figures are available for convention refugees who have gone through the asylum system and others in the categories of persons with leave to remain on humanitarian grounds, on subsidiary protection or residency for being the parent of an Irish child.

## How we work

Our mission statement: Diversity Sligo supports asylum seekers and refugees towards their integration into Irish society.

Our aims and objectives are:

- To provide person support and or group base support as appropriate
- To respond to needs identified by Asylum Seekers and Refugees
- To identify possible solutions to meet the presenting needs of Asylum Seekers and Refugees
- To liaise with other organisations and agencies as needed
- To provide information, advice and support on an ongoing basis
- To advocate on behalf of Asylum Seekers and Refugees
- To support social connection and participation of Asylum Seekers and Refugees
- To support positive physical and mental health and well-being.
- To promote equality and respect for Asylum Seekers and Refugees.
- To be a voice for change at a local and national level

### Internal Statements

To challenge and address the Direct Provision System with the view to improving it at the national level. Direct Provision is a short term solution and as an entity needs modification.

## Funding

Funding for our activities comes from donations and grants. This year we received donations from

The St Stephen's Green Trust	Transition Support Programme and Children's Activities
Tusla	Transition Support Programme and Summer Camps for Children
Bishop Doran	Children's Educational Needs
GIY Ireland	Poly Tunnel maintenance
Bridgestock	Psychological Support, Summer Camps for Children and Gym and Swim tickets
Sisters of Mercy	General expenses and comfort fund
Sligo County Council	Books for the Globe House Library
Diocesan Charitable Trust	Welcome Table Project
MSLETB Mayo Creds	Gym and Swim tickets, bicycle maintenance and Summer Camps
Rotary Club	Children's Educational Needs
Sligo Social Services	Christmas Party
Churches Together Week	General expenses and comfort fund
St. Anne's Parish	Gym and Swim tickets
Columban Club No.3	Outing
St. Vincent De Paul	Exceptional medical needs

Grant applications were made to the Applegreen Trust, the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration, the Lions Club, Energia Get Ireland Growing Fund, Sligo County Council, the National Lottery, PEACE IV, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and Tusla.

We received a donation in kind from Gilla Cornelius, Organisational Consultant, who facilitated the review of the company and the drafting of the Strategic Plan over several months.

We are very grateful to all our funders without whom we could not operate.



## Interagency work:

Our partners include: The Home School Liaison Service, the Sligo LEADER Partnership, the Sligo County Childcare Committee, Lifestart, Resource House Project, Bridgestock Care, Sligo Social Services, the Sligo Sports and Recreation Partnership, St Vincent de Paul, MSL ETB, Sligo Volunteer Centre, St Michael's Family Life Centre, Tusla, the St Stephen's Green Trust, the Avalon Centre, the Bishop of Elphin, the Sisters of Mercy Western Province, Rotary Club Sligo.

We work with the Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre for Sligo Leitrim and West Cavan, SPIRASI the Centre for the Victims of Torture, Dublin and Galway Law Centres, Immigrant Council of Ireland, the Migrant Rights Centre, the HSE Mental Health Social Workers and other organisations concerned with the welfare and well-being of asylum seekers and refugees.

Our staff also have partners and network with other organisations. See under Staff.

## What we do:

- We support asylum seekers living in Globe House, the direct provision accommodation centre
- We support people in transition between Globe House and the community when they get their papers
- We support refugees living in the community

## Who we are:

### Directors:

The Board of Management is composed of five directors, Frank Ballantyne, David McLoughlin, Shupai Matewa, Josette Newman and Peter O'Rourke

### Committee:

The committee is composed of the directors above and Sr Kathleen Conneally, Nneka Cummings, Ramona Dolan (Acting Treasurer), Sylvia Farkasovska, Jonathan May and James Sahr Aruna. Some of the committee members are representatives of organisations, others are volunteers, one is an asylum seeker living in Globe House and one is a refugee living in the community.

The committee has two sub-committees:

- The Employment sub-committee
- The Finance sub-committee

### Volunteers:

We have 32 volunteers

- 9 Befrienders
- 4 English and homework tutors for children
- 1 English tutor for an adult
- 1 Movement and relaxation tutor
- 5 Gardening and befriending volunteers



- 1 Website designer
- 1 Art teacher
- 1 Music teacher
- 1 Organisational Consultant
- 1 bicycle mechanic
- 7 committee members including the chairperson, secretary and treasurer. They take on specific additional roles:
  - Funding co-ordination
  - Information provision and advocacy
  - Organisation of activities for adults and children
  - Finance co-ordination for educational purposes for children
  - Poly tunnel supervision
  - Volunteers co-ordination

There is a constant need for Befrienders and English tutors for adults on a one to one basis. These roles are very beneficial to residents and real friendships are formed. Applications are made through the Sligo Volunteer Centre.

## Staff:

### Transition Support Worker

Andrea Best started working in April 2017 on a part-time basis. She helps people who have got their papers and who are moving from Globe House into the community. She can help with

- Filling housing applications
- Applying for HAP
- Applying for Social Welfare
- Applying for Education
- Applying for a Job
- Applying for Family Reunification
- Looking for accommodation

Andrea liaises regularly with County Councils, the Department of Justice, St Vincent de Paul, MSL ETB, MABS, Sligo Citizens Information Services, Focus Ireland, Tusla, the St Stephen's Green Trust, the Home Youth Liaison Service, the HSE, Department of Social Protection, Credit Union, Sligo Family Resource Centre, schools, UNHCR, Garda Immigration Officer, Immigrant Council and estate agencies.

### Psychological Support Workers

We have dedicated psychological support especially for Globe House residents when an urgent need arises and when funding allows. Counsellors have a high level of knowledge and understanding of asylum seekers issues in order to deal specifically with them.

## Summary of Activities

### Information, Advice and Advocacy:

Clinics in Globe House take place twice a week. They are held in Globe House dining hall or in the conference room. Queries include:

- Requests for transfers
- Requests for education
- Information about engagement in voluntary work
- Requests for activities
- Queries regarding the International Protection procedures
- Requests to write letters to solicitors
- Queries on employment and self-employment
- Personal queries

20 residents per week on average avail of this service.

Meetings take place in the community in response to demand. Queries include:

- Applications for Travel Documents
- Applications for citizenship
- Applications for Family Reunification
- Visa applications

20 refugees per year on average avail of this service.



### Activities for adults:

- Physical activities include the very popular Gym and Swim opportunities in the Sligo Sports Complex, Movement and Relaxation, Football membership
- Residents can borrow bicycles
- We have a poly tunnel staffed by volunteers. It has expanded over the years. Residents pick the crops and volunteers cook with the residents
- Information is available on activities in the community and residents are encouraged to take part.
- Well-being activities are very beneficial and we apply regularly for funding to run workshops

### Activities for children

- We run a book library for children
- We provide out of school and out of centre activities for children. These include football, Gaelic football, swimming and swimming lessons, martial arts, athletics and dancing. We consult with parents and children and respond to requests
- We provide Christmas presents at the Christmas party
- We try to provide second-hand bicycles for all the children



### **Activities for families**

- We worked with Lifestart to run a Parent and Toddler group in Globe House
- The Welcome Table was available to families. They were given € 30 to buy ingredients and were able to cook for themselves and have dinner in St Michael's Family Life Centre. This is the Bishop of Elphin's idea and he financed the project
- We organise one outing per year for families, to the beach or a point of interest.

### **Educational Supports for Children**

- We provide contributions to book rental, the purchase of educational supplies and exam fees thanks to donations from the Bishop of Elphin and the Rotary Club
- This year we provided school packs thanks to Sligo Social Services and a grant from FEAD.

## Future Development:

The new legislation regarding the right to work of certain asylum seekers has implications for the services we offer and we will respond with information sessions and referrals to the ETB, the Jobs Club, Enterprise Sligo and other organisations.

There is a growing demand for English language one to one tutors and we will be recruiting additional volunteers.

We will be expanding our Befriending programme to respond to the enthusiastic demands of residents and recruiting volunteers.

We will continue to apply for funding in order to put on well-being courses which are a basic need for residents.

This year we undertook to draw up a strategic plan for 2018 to 2020 with the help and support of Gilla Cornelius in her capacity as organisational consultant. In order to maintain the service levels we have achieved, we cannot continue to rely solely on volunteers and it is now necessary to employ a part-time co-ordinator whose role will be to:

- Organise activities for adults
- Organise activities for children of all ages
- Organise activities for families
- Co-ordinate volunteer involvement
- Collect information and statistics
- Compile an annual report.

We plan to continue to respond to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees as they express them and we keep an open mind on other developments.