

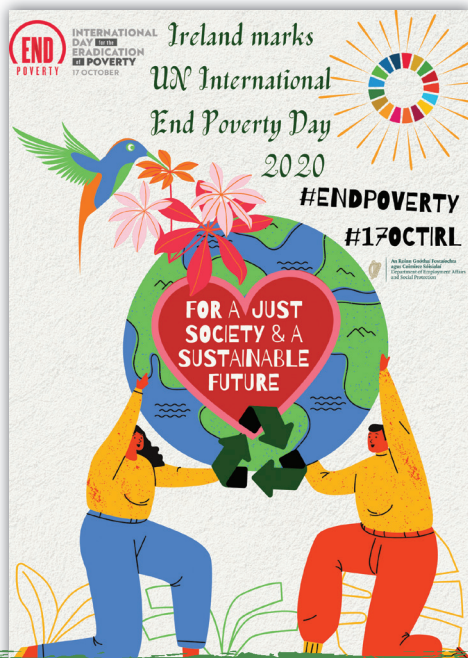
To commemorate
The United Nations International Day
for the Eradication of Poverty
17th October 2020

MY STORY

An act of solidarity with
the fight to eradicate poverty

by

**Tullamore Community
& Family Resource Centre**



“We have to listen to the people who are suffering on the margins to allow them to change our lives.”

Sr. Stanislaus Kennedy

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection supports this project as part of its funding initiative for the United Nations Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

The views expressed in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

TÚSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency



An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta
agus Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Employment Affairs
and Social Protection



**INTERNATIONAL
DAY for the
ERADICATION
of POVERTY**
17 OCTOBER





INTERNATIONAL
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MY STORY

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FOREWORD

Every year on 17th October Tullamore Community & Family Resource hold an event to promote and raise awareness of the UN International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. This is a day we say poverty in the world should end. We also remember that by working together we can make sure that one day it disappears.

'My Story' is a collection of life experiences looking through the eyes of people living in our own community, in their own words. The book includes a snapshot of happy and sad memories, times of hardship, perseverance and endurance, and hope for the future. 'My Story' will give a little insight to what it is like to live in poverty, experience hardship or overcome adversity in Ireland from a local perspective and is an act of solidarity with the fight to eradicate poverty globally. October 17th presents an opportunity to acknowledge the effort and struggle of people living in poverty, a chance for them to make their concerns heard, and a moment to recognize that poor people are the first ones to fight against poverty.

I acknowledge the Department of Social Protection and All Together in Dignity (ATD) Ireland for their support in this project and I thank all the people who have given freely of their time and shared their individual stories with us.

We hope this book will give time for reflection and shine a light on people and families in our communities who may be experiencing poverty and finally we ask you to join us to commemorate the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 17th October.

Anne Kelly

Chairperson, Tullamore Community & Family Resource Centre



The United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty


The **World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty** has been celebrated every October 17th since 1987. Born from the initiative of Father Joseph Wresinski and that of several thousand people from all backgrounds who gathered on the Plaza of Human Rights in Paris in 1987, this day has been officially recognized by the United Nations since 1992.

Why a World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty?

To ensure the voices of the most disadvantaged are heard - The World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty is commemorated so that the voices of those who are usually reduced to their difficulties, or even held responsible for them, are heard. 'It's our day, we can express what we have in our heart without shame, without embarrassment', said one participant. The World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty gives them the opportunity to speak out on the harsh conditions under which they live, on their daily resistance to these conditions, and their aspirations. One can conquer extreme poverty only when you begin to listen to those most directly impacted by it.

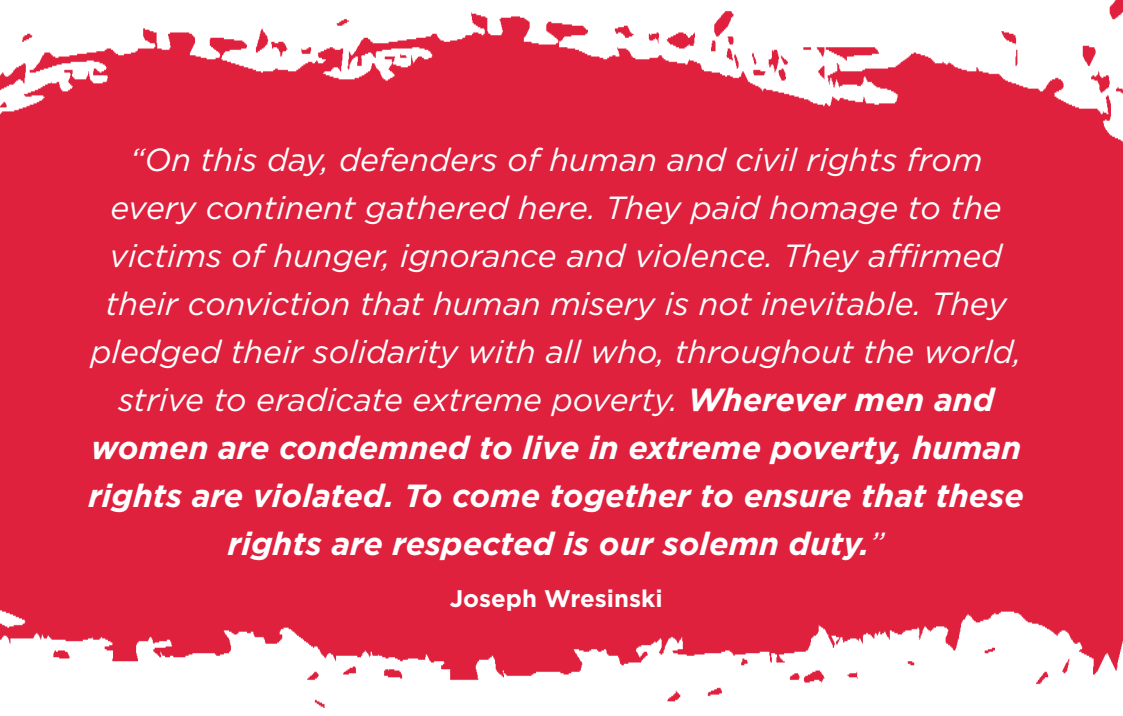
To mobilize citizens and public officials - Poverty is a violation of fundamental human rights. Poverty is not inevitable and it can be fought and defeated, as were slavery and apartheid. In France, in particular, the commemoration invites us to understand how everyone, wherever they are, can act.

A point of support for a fundamental struggle against extreme poverty - ATD Fourth World, on this day, wishes that the initiatives inspired by the memorial's message multiply and are heard by associations, elected representatives, and citizens everywhere. ATD Fourth World is



committed to reaching out to others in honour of the victims of extreme poverty, and for the mobilisation of all the defenders of human rights. With this ethic, October 17 is a point of support for a dynamic of refusal of extreme poverty all year long.

A message that resonates very broadly in the area of human rights and freedoms, Joseph Wresinski, founder of ATD Fourth World, inaugurated the memorial that includes this inscription:



*“On this day, defenders of human and civil rights from every continent gathered here. They paid homage to the victims of hunger, ignorance and violence. They affirmed their conviction that human misery is not inevitable. They pledged their solidarity with all who, throughout the world, strive to eradicate extreme poverty. **Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights are respected is our solemn duty.**”*

Joseph Wresinski



I Bear Witness...

Joseph Wresinski's Address October 17, 1987

Human Rights Plaza, Paris

You, the millions and millions
of children, women and fathers
who have died from misery and hunger
and whose legacy we hold.
It is not your death that I evoke,
today on this Plaza of Human Rights and Liberties.

I bear witness to your lives.
I bear witness to you, the mothers,
whose children are cast aside in this world,
condemned as they are to sheer misery.

I bear witness to your children,
twisted by the pains of hunger,
no longer able to smile,
yet still yearning to love.

I bear witness to the millions of young people
who have no reason to believe or even to exist,
and who vainly search for a future in this senseless world.

I bear witness to you, the poor of all times,
still poor today, forever on the road,
fleeing from place to place,
despised and disgraced.

Labourers without a trade,
ever crushed by their toil.
Labourers whose hands, today,
are no longer useful.

Millions of men, women, and children
whose hearts are still pounding strong
to the beat of the struggle,
whose minds rise in revolt
against the unjust fate imposed upon them,
whose courage demands the right
to priceless dignity.

I bear witness to you,
children, women and men,
who do not want to condemn,
but to love, to pray, to work, and to unite,
so that a world of solidarity may be born.
A world, our world, in which all people
would have given the best of themselves before dying.

I bear witness to you,
men, women and children.
Your renown is henceforth engraved
by heart, hand and tool,
in the marble of this Plaza of Human Rights and Liberties.

I bear witness to you, so that humanity
may at last fulfil its true destiny,
refusing forever that misery prevail.

Joseph Wresinski, 17 October 1987





MY STORY

Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

Tullamore Community & Family Resource Centre thank everyone who shared their stories with us for this publication.



ALICE

Mom worked in a second-hand shop, so mom was able to dress us well. As I got older, I learned about charity shops and I valued them. I have experienced homelessness which has led me to have a lot of fear and depression. The support I got from connecting services was amazing, they provided me with information and support for me and my family. Mullingar Homeless Service helped me get a house that gave me safety and strength coming from a domestic violence relationship. The Family Resource Centre supported me with food and counselling and linked me with groups that really helped me. My wish is to continue to have a strong relationship with my boys and that we can get through life. I have linked with services such as LOETB for courses and I would love to return to work, but at my age It can be hard after rearing my children. I dream of someday owning my own house.

*"Never forget that walking away from something
unhealthy is brave even if you stumble a little
on your way out the door."*

Unknown



ROSE

When we were all young, we were very poor and sometimes would have one sausage and rasher to share between six children. We would often get porridge for breakfast, lunch and dinner. When I was bringing up my own kids, I would often have to give them rice twice a day, morning and evening and then some kind of dinner. I really like Christmas because after saving a few pounds I got to give my family a nice dinner. Now my situation is worse because our family income has been cut and I find it very hard to pay bills and feed my family. I often give my son my leftovers, so he has that extra bit. At times I find I have to look for food supports. I dream that in the future I will not have to ask for help and to just live a comfortable life. I hope my kids never have this struggle. I do worry about them all the time that they will be ok.

"Extreme poverty since it cuts out all human rights creates an unbearable waste of human intelligence, inventiveness, hope and love."

Jospeh Wresinski



JAMAL

In my past it was very hard when I came to Ireland, I could not speak English. Now life is better for me. I can speak English and I work as a support worker for refugees, supporting new people that come to this country. I support them in many ways, in education, health and many other areas. I am also studying for a Masters in college. My hopes and dreams are that everyone that suffers from war finds a safe place to go to. When we experience war and we have no choice but to move it is very hard, we lose family and neighbours. I hope war will end and for anyone that must leave their country that they have a welcoming place to come to as I did in Ireland.

*"I bear witness to you, the poor of all times, still poor today,
forever on the road, fleeing from place to place,
despised and disgraced."*

Jospeh Wresinski

MARY

Growing up life was often tough on my family! My parents worked hard for little income. This caused a lot of tension and frustration within the home. At the age of 15 I started working part time while at school to help pay for stuff I needed. My school days were not a good experience and memories of this have stuck with me all my life. In my primary school the teachers hit the children, and this terrified me. I remember being told by a teacher that I would never amount to anything.

From my life experience I have become a very strong person. I am a single parent, and at times this can be a struggle, but I do whatever it takes to give my child the best life possible. From a very young age she has seen me studying and working hard and she now believes this is natural. My hopes and dreams are that people become more supportive towards each other and that I can continue to give my daughter everything she deserves.



*"Education is the most powerful weapon which
you can use to change the world."*

Nelson Mandela



TRAVELLER COMMUNITY

In the past people were a lot friendlier, we could mix with settled people in pubs all the time, now we cannot. I have worked from the age of 11, times were hard, but they were good times. In our community the issues we are experiencing now include drugs, overcrowded homes, domestic violence, mental health, and access to vital health information. Since the onset of Covid-19 there is an increase of people drinking alcohol especially within the youth and this is affecting their mental health. Domestic violence is on the rise and women cannot get away from the abuse. People in our community have serious health issues and will not go to the doctor because doctors are not seeing as many clients now. Many travellers do not know how to use a computer, and everything is online now! Using the phone line for information about Covid-19 is very impersonal as it is an answering machine. Some travellers can use Facebook and can get information for family members. We now have a supporting traveller's helpline which is running very well. Prayers have become stronger; people are saying more rosaries. We work hard supporting our community and providing a lot of information, numbers have increased with the flu vaccine and the uptake is incredible. What we hope for in the future is that a vaccine is available quickly.



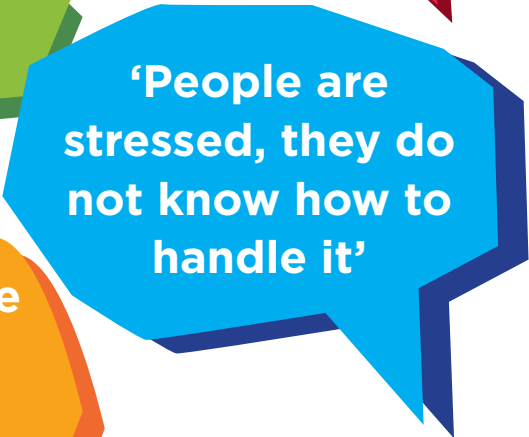
‘I would love to see things come back to some normality’



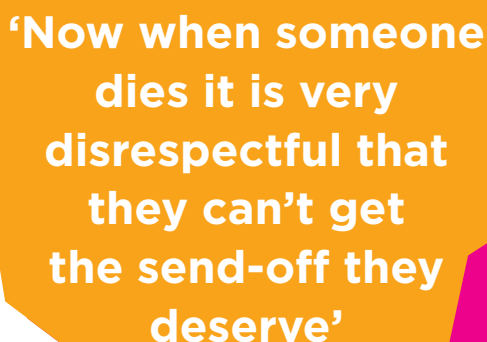
‘I am really hoping to get through this winter’



‘People are afraid of Covid -19’



‘People are stressed, they do not know how to handle it’



‘Now when someone dies it is very disrespectful that they can’t get the send-off they deserve’



‘The primary and community healthcare are extremely powerful in getting information out there’



JOANNE

I grew up in Northern Ireland during the troubles. Bombs going off were the norm and you passed no remarks. You just got on with your daily routine. Up until my teenage years we would have all played together, there was no divide in play. A sad time in my life was when a teacher I knew was killed by a bomb planted under a car that she was travelling home in. The man she knew had offered her a lift. Going in and out of other towns and crossing the border to go to dances was not very nice as we were constantly stopped by the soldiers.

I went to America to work as a nanny and I met my husband there. I spent a few years there and found life was too fast. I came back to Ireland with my husband and three children to have a more relaxed lifestyle. I live in the countryside outside Tullamore and we are financially secure. I hope to see my children finish their education and be able to choose what they want to do in life. I am so glad that things have changed in Northern Ireland and I hope there will never be another border dividing us.

*"To every child - I dream of a world where you can laugh,
dance, sing, learn, live in peace and be happy."*

Malala Yousafzai



SARAH

Life was hard for me growing up in a poor family. I was one of five children. My father worked for farmers and work was not constant. Things were hard and we always seemed to be balancing things out. I remember often going to bed hungry. There was never enough food and my mother often had to beg for money to buy food. My father was a chain smoker and a lot of money went on his cigarettes along with buying out the house from the council. I would be sad when the children in my class would talk about their holidays as I could not talk about mine. We only went to the bog.

My school days were not very happy even though I loved learning. I was bullied the whole time I was there. I left early and went to a Training Centre where I trained as a Chef. I later went to the Adult Education Centre and completed my Junior Cert and my Leaving Cert. I was so happy with myself for this achievement.

Coming from this childhood I am determined to do the best I can for my three children. I make sure they have food on the table, warm clothes, help with schoolwork and a happy home. I check in with the school often to make sure that bullying does not happen to my children.

My hopes for the future are that my children will have a happy life and that no child will be bullied in school or anywhere on their journey to adulthood.

ELIZABETH

I come from a family of twelve children. I grew up in Limerick. My school days were horrible and the memory of them has stayed with me all my life. Because I was a member of the travelling community I was not allowed to sit with the class. All the traveller children had to sit at the back of the class where we were given crayons and pictures to colour. We were given the job of cleaning up the play yard after the lunch breaks, as the other children were deemed too good for such a task.

The teacher's cane was called Jackie. I got beaten with it for asking questions and not knowing my place. When a new teacher came to teach us in fifth or sixth class, school took a turn for the better. The new teacher taught me to read and write. When I left school, I got a job in a shop. I earned £7 a week. I was allowed to keep £1 and give my mother the £6. I met my husband at work and when we married, we moved to London. I found life in London easy and I did not encounter much discrimination. I had four children when we returned to Ireland in the 1990's. We were refused accommodation because we were travellers. Over the phone we were told to meet them at the premises for rent but when they realised we were travellers, we were refused. We eventually got a flat when I used my maiden name. From this accommodation we got a local authority house in which we live in today.

I joined the local travellers' organisations to lobby for better services for the travelling community and to ensure that my children had a better experience in school. My main aim was to abolish the special classes for traveller children. I am still involved in O.T.M. I am a fighter; I will always fight for an equal society for all.



THERESA

I came from a large family, growing up I remember how we would grow our own vegetables and cut our own turf. Food was basic but Christmas was magical as we would get a goose, pudding, trifle, and minerals. We would purchase half a brandy with peppermint for my grandmother, this was her treat. In later years we all admitted to taking a slug. Before getting a radio, we would sit around the fire and sing songs. I had no problems in school, but I do know some girls who had a hard time.

As I got older, I wanted to train as a nurse. My family could not afford to pay for me to train at home and I had to travel to the UK. Moving to Manchester was a big culture shock for me. It was hard to leave my family and move to a big city not knowing anybody.

I met my husband at a party in Tullamore, we lived in London and had 5 children. Like everything else we had our ups and downs. When I worked in Northern Ireland, I was the only Irish person there and there was a lot of trouble there. My husband died in 2005 after many years of ill health. I was lucky I got to travel quite a lot.




PRIYA

India was our home country, but I knew we had to leave. I was married at 22, living with my husband and his family of eight, in a four bedroom house. Water was only available in the taps for two hours during the day, therefore, we had to ensure that the plastic containers were full enough for the family to have showers, and do the washing, cooking and cleaning. There were regular power cuts. The temperature in Mumbai was 40 degrees. There was a division between the rich and poor. We lived a modest life. My husband worked in Mumbai as a car sales assistant. But it was never enough.

A year later, my daughter was born. We wanted to live separately away from his family and give our child a better future. We made the decision that we would go to England. A couple of months later, my brother prepared our Visa and gave us £500.

In July 1980, the day had come. We packed our bags and boarded the plane. We arrived in London, Heathrow, not a bit of English, and only £500 in our pockets. My brother collected us at the airport and brought us to his home. It was exciting, yet lonely knowing that we had left our families and culture behind.

We got to know our area and met some Asian families from home. My husband got a job as a sales assistant, earning £30 per week. I found work through a friend, delivering pamphlets, earning £5 per week. We had no transport, so managed to get lifts to get around.



Gradually, our family grew and through the children, we began to learn English. Our friends circle became bigger. A few years later, we moved to Ireland to look at business opportunities. After 35 years of hard work and labour, we are still here. Ireland is our home now.

Looking back at those days, yet we miss home, our culture and our families, leaving Mumbai was the best decision we made. We now have a comfortable home, with running water. The climate isn't great, but we can always go to visit.



PATRICK

There were five children in my family three boys and two girls, we were all split up at a young age. My father and mother got TB, and both went into hospital at the same time. I was five and half years old. My brothers were sent to my Nan, my Aunts and another to the Nuns, this brother was the youngest at six months old. My parents were in hospital for two and half years, my dad only got out of hospital and was sent back in with pneumonia and died shortly afterwards. My mom could not attend the funeral, she watched from the window in the old County Hall in Tullamore. My youngest brother ended up living in a Care Home and is still not well today.



PAUL

I am 45, I went to school in the 80's and 90's. I did not want to do my Leaving Cert but my parents made me. I went to college to study hotel management and left after two months deciding it was not for me. I just wanted to get out and get to work, my family was not well off and like so many others at that time they could not find work. My sister and I had everything we needed but certainly not everything we wanted, and I wanted to start to make money for myself.

I bought a ticket and went to the US where I found a job in restaurant. I ended up managing that restaurant, even though it required a degree, they overlooked that because I was a hard worker, but I really had to prove myself and for 3 years I ran myself into the ground because I felt I owed it to my employer. When the restaurant was sold the new owner would not keep me. I managed to get other jobs in restaurants, but lack of qualifications always held me back. Disillusioned I eventually moved home.

I had all this experience and the only job I could get was as a waiter because of that decision I made to leave college, I couldn't even get an interview in Ireland so I was faced with working in a coffee shop for the rest of my life or to go back to education at 40. After much consideration I decided to go back to full time education in an entirely different area of study. I knew that I wanted to work with people. I started slowly with a Level 5 course with the ETB, then I went to a Business College for Level 6 in Community Development. I am now a third level student, studying Level 8, Social Care Practice, and I absolutely love it. I get a grant, so my fees are paid, and I get the Back to Education Allowance which is like job seekers. It is a struggle but manageable.

I hope to work with families in need or children in residential care when I finish college. I hope to do my master's in social care or psychology while I work. I will be 46 when I qualify, something I could have done when I was 22. I was lucky some companies overlooked it and some did not and it cost me jobs and limited my career, I thought it would be hard going back to college and that the young people would not accept me, but the young people look to me for my experience and my experience helps in college. The best decision I ever made was to go back to education.

JOHN

When I was a young lad I remembered we got hand me downs, you ate what you were given because if you didn't you wouldn't get anything else, "there was no waste". I would help my dad out in the house, and I would give my mam my last penny if I had it. I was always willing to help! I always felt I should. When I came home from school after doing my homework and chores, I would go outside and play football, we would stay out till dark. We got lots of fresh air. I got a job at the age of fourteen and I stayed in this all my life. "I had bills to pay and I had to keep a roof over our heads".

My wishes are that my grandkids find a job they are happy doing, I hope they can make a reasonable living and a good life for themselves.



ANNA

I come from a very large family. My father was a postman. While he was in this job, things were good. My father decided to become self-employed, by becoming a street trader. This meant trade was not guaranteed, and a wage was not always forthcoming.


I remember being cold and hungry due to no money coming into the house. My mother often had to go to the welfare officer. It was up to him to decide whether to give you something or not. She felt this demeaned her.

As children, we did the work of strong men, lifting heavy weights. All this was to help my father earn a living.

At 15 I started working in a factory, earning £50 a week. I had to hand up £40, because there were eight children younger than me to feed and dress.

I am married with children of my own now and have had some hardship. During the recession, my husband was laid off work for three years. We used up most of our small savings to keep the bills paid. Now it has happened again because of Covid-19. Thank God it was not for as long this time.

My health is not great now as I suffer from a bad back and hips. This was caused from all the hard work and lifting as a child of nine years. This work was not fit for a child. This was manual labour, but was necessary to help my father keep a family fed.



I hope when Covid-19 passes we can get back to normal and have enough income to pay the bills, put food on the table, and enjoy time as a family without worry. I hope that no other child must undertake manual work beyond their years like I did to help my father earn a living.

TOM

I grew up in Dublin, we used to play on the road, skipping and playing hopscotch. We would go in and out of other people's houses. As we got older, we would go picking fruit to get a few bob. We would be out no matter what the weather was like. I grew up in a happy home, my nan lived with us. She directed us rightly in life. When I got married my wife stayed home to mind our five children, she was there to guide them in the right direction. My kids are doing well! I think a lot of the problem now is that parents often must have two jobs to survive.



TULLAMORE COMMUNITY & FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

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Charitable Status No:15336



Supporting Families through 'Covid-19'

We find ourselves living in truly unprecedented times. Everyone's lives and daily routines are affected by the measures that have been introduced to disrupt the spread of the virus and keep us all safe. It is normal to be worried or to feel stressed during this difficult time, but there are many things we can do to help us mind our mental health and wellbeing. What is of the utmost importance is to keep ourselves and our families safe and healthy.

The centre is working in compliance with the current regulations in place for the safety and wellbeing of our community. The board, staff, and volunteers all look forward to the return to normal life and the good times ahead. Until then the staff of Tullamore CFRC are still working behind the scenes with agencies, services, families and individuals. Some people might find this time more worrying than others and may need some extra support on the phone or online.

Please call to get in touch for a chat or support or contact us on Facebook.

.....

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Follow us on FB Tullamore Community and Family Resource Centre
for updates and information.

See **Parenting 24 Seven** for key messages on what works best for children and families at different ages and stages.



Drop in Family Support

Tullamore Resource Centre provide supportive listening and a referral service for families when they are dealing with everyday issues that are affecting their wellbeing or health.

Meitheal



If your child is facing challenges that are difficult to overcome such as feeling down, problems at school, loneliness, difficult behaviour, social difficulties, coping with illness or bereavement etc. Meitheal can help you get the support that is best for you in a coordinated manner. Just contact the centre to avail of this.

Counselling Service

Are you having difficulties in your life. Would it help to talk to someone? Tullamore Resource Centre offers an affordable and confidential counselling service. For more information contact Margaret at 057 9320598

Play Therapy

Play Therapy is a therapeutic method of Psychotherapy for children aged 3 years and upwards. It explores a child's natural means of expression to help them cope in their world. It is a clinical therapy and aimed at supporting mental health needs and development difficulties of children. Play enables the therapist and child to develop a trusted relationship which is consistent with helping a person gain mastery over a situation or trauma they have experienced.

Lego Club

Lego Club is a social skills group which supports and teaches co-operation, responsibility, team-work and social communication.



Speech and Language Therapy Drop-in Clinic

On the **first Friday of each month**. You can get ideas to develop your child's communication and find out what you can do to help them learn new words or improve their speech. This service is intended for children who are not attending the Speech and Language Therapy Service. If you have any concerns about your child, please call in. No appointment necessary.

If you would like more information, please call in or contact the centre on 057 9320598 or email info@tfrc.ie.



Painting by Kevin Connolly

“Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights are respected is our solemn duty.”

Joseph Wresinski



Arden View, Tullamore, Co. Offaly, R35 YF57

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