

# SocialiSE

Part of the Awareness Raising Initiatives for Social Enterprise (ARISE) Scheme 2021



Donie McGrath, ILDN, Margaret Leahy of Rethink Ireland, Mary Lawlor, Clann Credo and Margaret Dorgan, Catalysat SocialiSE

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# Summit hears of huge potential for social enterprises in Ireland

Social enterprises in Ireland have huge potential for growth in terms of scale and impact, Andrew Forde, Principal Officer in the Rural Strategy and Social Enterprise Unit at the Department of Rural and Community Development, said in his keynote speech to the SocialiSE Summit at the F2 Centre in Rialto, Dublin 8, last month.

"Social enterprises should be a central component of community responses to societal challenges, and should be seen as key drivers of an inclusive and sustainable recovery," he said.

He added that partnership continues to be key to developing a robust social economy and stressed the importance of all local development companies ensuring that every social enterprise takes part in the first National Baseline Data Collection Exercise of Social Enterprise in Ireland, which will provide government with critical evidence as it develops the new National Social Enterprise policy and supports for the sector.

The Summit, a key part of the ILDN's strategy under the ARISE programme to raise awareness of social enterprises in Ireland, drew a diverse attendance of people from existing and aspiring social enterprises.

Throughout the event delegates at the F2 Centre, which proved to be an excellent venue for the Summit, took part in wide-ranging discussions aimed at maximising the performance of their social enterprises and received advice from subject matter experts on topics such as sourcing funding, legal obligations and governance, and using social media to boost a business.

In addition, break-out sessions looked at different funding opportunities for existing and new social enterprises, how to balance corporate and community effectively, empowering a social enterprise brand through storytelling, and powering your sales through networking.

Anyone who was unable to attend can catch up with the speeches and discussions on the [ILDN's YouTube](#) channel.



Welcome to the third and final edition of 'SocialiSE', bringing you news and pictures from the highly successful SocialiSE 22 Summit, which was held at the F2 Centre in Rialto, Dublin, on June 29th. This newsletter includes a report on 'Building Community Cohesion through Social Enterprise', the excellent speech given by Andrew Forde, Principal Officer in the Rural Strategy and Social Enterprise Unit at the Department of Rural and Community Development, at the Summit. As Andrew makes clear, we have achieved a lot together, and we have a lot more to achieve! Also in this issue, the Big Interview is with Ronah Corcoran who after a career as a carer formed Carers Network Ireland, a social enterprise that supports care professionals – who experience double the level of mental health challenges as other individuals and half of all work-related injuries in Ireland. And our Community Focus for this issues looks at Connections Arts Centre, a not-for-profit social

enterprise in Dublin which aims to support and connect the disability community through a range of in-person and online arts, lifestyle and training programmes. We'd like to extend our warm thanks to the F2 Centre for providing such an excellent venue for the Summit, to everyone who attended it, and to everyone who contributed ideas to the newsletter in recent months. We wish you all an excellent summer and hope to see you at the 4th National Social Enterprise Conference, which will be hosted in Dublin by DRCD on International Social Enterprise Day, which this year falls on Thursday, November 17th.

**Donie McGrath**  
Employment & Enterprise, Coordinator, ILDN



## NEWS

# A day out at the Aviva for our Ukrainian friends

Sligo LEADER Partnership Company were delighted to work with social enterprises to facilitate a trip for the Ukrainian people living in Sligo to Aviva Stadium to see Ireland v Ukraine in the UEFA Nations League in June.

Development Officers in Sligo LEADER Partnership contacted the FAI to see if they would donate tickets and were overwhelmed to receive 100 tickets.

Sligo Local Link and Clasp Sligo (Community of Lough Arrow Social Project), a social enterprise which among other services provides transport to isolated people, were on hand to make sure there was transport available for the big game.

It was a wonderful occasion for our new community of Ukrainians to take their minds off their troubles and enjoy the game. There were many happy faces on the return home as they got to meet up with friends and return with a 1-0 win against Ireland. Sligo Leader is grateful to the FAI, Aviva Stadium, Sligo Local Link and Clasp Sligo for making this all happen.



Ukraine fans enjoying the atmosphere at the Aviva Stadium

# 'A social-first model for Ireland'

*Social Enterprises exist to improve lives, Andrew Forde tells summit delegates.*

In his speech to the SocialiSE Summit, Dr Andrew Forde, Principal Officer in the Rural Strategy and Social Enterprise Unit at the Department of Rural and Community Development, said that the social enterprise model is business but better. "Social enterprises are transformative businesses, with clear social or environmental goals. They are trading to improve lives," he said.

Andrew suggested that Ireland should consider a social-first model if social enterprise is to play a central role in fostering an inclusive and sustainable recovery.

He added that social innovation is fundamentally a human rights based concept. "A thriving society is one that not only includes the marginalised, but strives for a cohesive society where everyone can contribute maximally to their communities," he said.

"We have seen over and over again what happens when we trust, support and mobilise the social capital within our communities: great things happen."

Andrew said the response to the Covid-19 pandemic was a case in point. "But we shouldn't overlook the everyday, tireless work of community groups that keeps our society going: providing social services, keeping our towns tidy, supporting the emotional and physical development of our young people, caring for our elderly, cherishing our natural environment, and so on. This is the social economy. And one part of that vibrant social economy, is the social enterprise sector."

**"We need to enhance sectoral awareness, civil/public service awareness, and broader societal awareness."**

He said that building awareness of social enterprise is a key aspect of the government's National Social Enterprise Policy. "We need to enhance sectoral awareness, civil/public service awareness, and broader societal awareness. The

misunderstanding about what social enterprises are, and what distinguishes them from mainstream business is stifling growth," he said.

Everyone, he said, has a shared responsibility to raise awareness about Social Enterprise but the most valuable spokespersons are those with lived experience of the value of social enterprise, or those who are working on a daily basis to support social enterprise development – which is why the Dormant Accounts-funded ARISE Scheme (Awareness Raising Initiatives for Social Enterprise) was launched.

"This event is one of the many brilliant projects and events funded under the scheme so far. A total of €1.2 million has been awarded under the ARISE scheme to 64 organisations nationwide since last year. The impact has been significant," he said.

Andrew said the ARISE scheme and many other supports provided by the government are designed to strengthen the social enterprise ecosystem in Ireland to allow it to grow in scale and impact. But for government to provide the appropriate mix of supports, it needs a strong and reliable data and evidence about the state of the sector.

He said it was imperative that local development companies promote and actively encourage participation in the first National Baseline Data Collection Exercise of Social Enterprise in Ireland, which is being conducted by a consortium including the ILDN, SERI and Amárach Research. "I cannot emphasise enough how important it is for every social enterprise to take part in the upcoming survey," he said. "The results will provide critical evidence as we move to developing the new National Social Enterprise policy and supports for the sector as a whole."



Dr Andrew Forde, Principal Officer in the Rural Strategy and Social Enterprise Unit at the Department of Rural and Community Development

Andrew's department have also engaged the OECD to conduct an in-depth international review of the implementation of the National Social Enterprise policy. "Together, the results of the OECD Review and the Baseline Data Gathering Exercise, will be valuable resources when developing the successor to the social enterprise policy that is due to be published in 2023," he said.

"The first policy was foundational; the next policy needs to be about consolidation and growth. We shouldn't accept social enterprise as something incidental, but rather a transformative, empowering and innovative business model for communities."

Andrew concluded by saying that the State recognises the need to proactively foster socially innovative approaches and will be developing a National Social Innovation Strategy and supporting work towards a National Competency Centre for Social Innovation.

He said social enterprises should be seen as key drivers of an inclusive and sustainable recovery and partnership continues to be key. "I see huge potential for growth for social enterprises, both in terms of scale and impact in the years ahead. In some senses, we are only at the starting line," he said.





*Donie McGrath, ILDN opens SocialiSE Summit at F2 Centre in Rialto, Dublin*



*Attendees of SocialiSE Summit listen intently to speakers at the event in the F2 Centre*

# SocialiSE Summit22

As can be seen from these photographs, the SocialiSE Summit at the F2 Centre in, Rialto, Dublin 8, was a great success. We would like to thank the F2 Centre for hosting the event so well. It was a credit to them, as is their work in providing employment, education and training opportunities in their community.

They have set a very high standard for future events to aspire to, and we look forward to rising to the challenge!



*Margaret Dorgan of Catalyst Coaching celebrates SocialiSE*



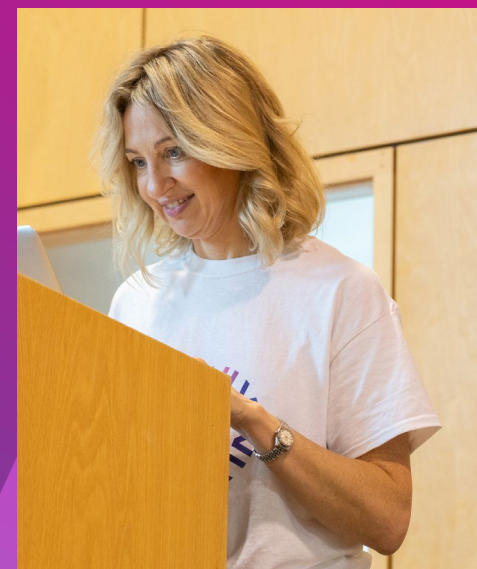
*Dr Andrew Forde, Dept of Rural & Community Development addresses the audience*



*Mary Murphy, Paul O'Donnell of Churchfield Community Trust CLG chat to Donal Traynor CEO Community Finance Ireland*



*Anne Maher from The Urban Co-Op*



*Renate Murphy, CAMEO Communications*



*Mary Lawlor, CEO Clann Credo*





*Stephen Ryan, Narration shows Donie McGrath, ILDN, Margaret Leahy of Rethink Ireland, Mary Lawlor, Clann Credo and Margaret Dorgan, Catalyst the ILDN social media footprint at SocialiSE*



*Julian Margarini and Angeli Camanara*



*PJ Murphy, IRD Duhallow talking to Tanya Lalor of Method Consultants*



*John Ryan, HEO Social Enterprise Unit at Department of Rural and Community Development, Fiona Blaney, Galway City Partnership and Donie McGrath*



*David Walsh & Stephen Ryan, Narration with Tanya Lalor Method Consultants ahead of SocialiSE Summit kick off*



*Conference attendee Fernanda Morales*



*Stephen Ryan, Narration*



# Caring for Carers



*Services that support carers are of vital importance, writes Donal Conaty.*

Few occupations carry with them as much stress and strain as is experienced by people working in the care sector. Indeed, care professionals experience double the level of mental health challenges as other individuals and half of all work-related injuries in Ireland.

Yet until very recently, there was no support organisation run by carers for carers available to those working in the sector. Carers Network Ireland (CNI) is a Galway-based social enterprise with a mission to empower care professionals, to tackle carer distress and to improve quality of care for carers through supports, resources and wellness.

CNI was founded by Ronah Corcoran, who spent 20 years working in the social care field in the areas of childcare, youth and homeless services, after she noticed increased levels of stress among peers who were coming to her for advice as they were suffering from burn-out.

***"We see ourselves as an organisation created by carers for carers. We know what carers are looking for, but we also ask them as well."***

Ronah, who is also a qualified wellness coach, began to research mental health stress among those working in the care sector. Her research in Ireland and the UK found that a lot of carers suffered from post-traumatic stress, and she decided to set up Carers Network Ireland.

Founded in 2019, CNI was originally planned as an in-person wellness support service starting in Galway and then expanding around the country. "We were hoping to launch in 2020, but, of course, Covid hit. It messed up all our plans, so we decided to bring all our services online. We realised we would reach more people. It actually suits those working in care services better because it is more flexible and more accessible," says Ronah.

"Initially, we did a pilot of in-person wellness classes in 2019, but people had difficulty in attending. Because of the nature of care work, some might be working nights or doing double shifts, some might be too tired to actually attend in person. So, we were already thinking of doing a hybrid model in-person and online when the pandemic hit. We ultimately decided to go solely with the digital solution as it was easier for carers to access and attend."

Ronah accepts that the nature of the job in the care sector is that there is stress involved because you are supporting the most vulnerable in society, whether it is children at risk or homeless individuals or people with disabilities. However, she feels that this makes it all the more important that there should be standardised, available and effective care for carers.

"The supports that are out there are very varied between the different organisations. Some have limited EAP (employment assistance programmes), some have minor wellness activities ad hoc during the year and some have nothing at all," she says.

"We did a bit of research when we started off and also in 2021. We asked carers and care managers what supports they had and what they needed, and all of them agreed that the supports that are there are insufficient. They are not flexible enough. They are not carer-focused. There's no 24/7 service where carers can go and say I need support now. And a lot of the services that were there couldn't be trusted because there was no input from carers, and they were management led. We see ourselves as an organisation created by carers for carers. We know what carers are looking for, but we also ask them as well."

Including Ronah, CNI has a four-member board made up of either care workers or family members of care workers. "Our director is a child care manager. We have a member who is a

housing support officer who works in homeless services, and we have a family member of a care worker, because when carers suffer from mental distress it doesn't just affect them but also the family around them," Ronah says.

"We are looking to expand that because we are getting busier. We are looking for ambassadors and volunteers to help us grow the social enterprise. We feel we could do with ambassadors to share the message around mental health in the care sector and mental stigma in the care sector, and to let carers know it's ok to be struggling. And volunteers are needed to help us with the digital aspect of things and with the running of the enterprise."

***"We find a lot of the time carers just want to talk and share their stories"***

Currently, CNI is still in the process of transitioning from an in-person service to an online one. "What we offer at the moment is one-to-one supports, so people contact us via email or social media if they have a query or need advice for something in relation to their care role or about the mental health supports that are out there. We have resources on our website for general helplines but also specific mental health supports. We regularly advertise free counselling that might be

available in Ireland at any given time," Ronah says.

"We are piloting a wellness programme where we are offering yoga, meditation, nutrition, self-care, and fitness classes among others. We hope to expand on that going forward. We also have a peer-to-peer support group on Facebook which members can join. That is there if someone is looking for a training opportunity or mental health support or just someone to talk to – we find a lot of the time carers just want to talk and share their stories."

At first, Ronah supported the social enterprise through her social care earnings. More recently, workshops and classes have generated revenue. It is hoped that the online resources CNI are building will also support the initiative.

"As part of our focus on digital, we've created an e-store, and we're launching a community hub for carers – a free service where they can find general supports, wellness and some free training opportunities – as the first phase of our digital platform. Later on in the year we are planning to launch the full digital wellness platform which will be geared to care organisations, so that they would buy-in to purchasing the service for their carers and care groups," Ronah says.

"We are also always looking for collaborations with training and mental health providers. We do link in with other agencies and other carer support agencies, but we feel that more collaboration, even with other social enterprises, would be really beneficial for everyone with the ultimate goal of creating a situation in Ireland where care professionals are nurtured, empowered and supported in their care role."



**Ronah Corcoran**



**The Care Pack from Carers Network Ireland**



# Building connections through the arts

by Robbie Brennan

As founder of Connections Arts Centre, a not-for-profit social enterprise whose aim is to support and connect the disability community, Miriam Spollen has never been busier.

"It's amazing how fast things have moved since we set up in 2021. We've so many projects ongoing and I'm working all hours but it's fantastic to see the difference we're making to the lives of so many people," she says.

Miriam started her design career in a bridal store on Dublin's Wicklow Street in the mid-noughties. Following a career break, she studied for a postgraduate degree in Community Arts and employment in the disability sector followed.

In 2020 she was completing a postgraduate course in Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship at Trinity College, with a vision of developing an accessible arts centre for the disability community, when the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic changed her plans.

"I lost my job after Covid struck. I wanted to do something to support the people I had worked with so I pivoted my business plan to develop an accessible online arts centre for the wider disability community," she says.

"The first 12 months we were solely an online arts centre running classes and training programmes. We only opened our premises in Rathgar in March this year and now we've agreed a lease to stay here for the next five years. It's crazy the speed things have progressed."

Connections Arts Centre, which has supported more than 500 members of the disability community to date, offers a

range of in-person and online arts, lifestyle and training programmes, including bespoke programmes tailored to meet the needs of clients and in-person classes that are open to all at its Rathgar headquarters.

Miriam explains that while these programmes are the organisation's bread and butter, she is piloting two other schemes – Creative TY Connections and Connecting Artists 2022 – which she hopes will secure much-needed grants and



Miriam Spollen, founder of Connection Arts Centre

funding in 2023.

Creative TY Connections is an innovative training programme in which young adults with disabilities and TY students work in tandem to develop their IT and social skills.

"The outcomes have been amazing. The programme not only addresses the digital divide but improves confidence, life skills and breaks down social barriers," she says.

"Connecting Artists is a participant-led online programme designed for visual artists with intellectual disabilities. Ten artists from all over Ireland have come together to develop their creative practice, the outcome of which will be an exhibition of their work, opening in the RCSI on June 26. It's a chance for them to be recognised as artists and they don't disappoint. The quality and talent on show is astonishing."

Miriam hopes to create a stable financial model on which to further grow the arts centre, adding that while the Rathgar headquarters is the ideal location for the social enterprise, more funding is needed to fully realise its potential.

"Some of the programmes we run need corporate sponsors because they cost money to run but don't create income. Luckily Connecting Artists 2022 was supported by Bank of Ireland, Business to Arts and the RCSI."



Connections Arts Centre  
Connecting Artists 23'



with Colm O'Connor

Colm O'Connor of IRD Duhallow Furniture Revamp talks to SocialiSE about the social enterprise that upcycles furniture in rural areas of north west Cork and south east Kerry.



## What is IRD Duhallow Furniture Revamp?

IRD Duhallow Furniture Revamp is a social enterprise which upcycles donated furniture and sells it at an affordable price to low-income households and the general public. We operate tiered pricing, so we give discounts to those who are marginalised or in low-income households. We also reupholster people's own furniture. Last year, we won the Community Recycling Organisation of the Year Award in the Pakman Awards. Since 2016, we have taken in over 205 tons of furniture and redistributed 189 tons. The discrepancy between the figures is either stock or stuff that we couldn't fix.

## Who is it for and how does it benefit them?

From the customer's point of view, it benefits low-income households and older people. It also provides sheltered training for people who are distant from the workplace. We give them skills that will carry them over. We offer everything from collection to delivery, to bits of upholstery, painting or helping out in the shop.

## How, why and when was Duhallow Furniture Revamp set up?

It was set up in January 2016 after Duhallow Community Food Services, when visiting older people in the community, identified a need for affordable furniture to ensure a general standard of living in their households. It was part of an outreach to marginalised people in very rural areas.

## How does it operate? What services does it provide?

It operates as a Community Services Programme and with help from work activation schemes. It provides training and a quality reuse service. Reuse of items is part of the circular economy that we are trying to encourage. In the past, because of our rural/mountainous area, there was a lot of fly tipping in our locality, but we seem to have a lot of that cleaned up because instead of dumping furniture, people are bringing it into us. For the last couple of months, in conjunction with Cork County Council, we have started a 'relove' paint scheme. The paint comes from the civic amenity sites and was costing the council a fortune to recycle. Sixty percent of the paint is water-based – we can recycle that. We created a workshop, where we remix it, recolour it and then resell it in five litre tubs for €15.

## What supports did you get to set it up and to run it

We receive Community Services Programme support. Our biggest issue is that we have successfully ran this social enterprise for six years with no funding for a manager. That's why I'm doing it even though I work for a different IRD Duhallow scheme – the Rural Social Scheme. We are spread thin.

## What are the challenges social enterprises like yours face on an ongoing basis?

Staffing is a challenge. We are expected to do the accounts, to do the office work, the shop, the reupholstering, to do the restoration work and the paint recycling. We could achieve an awful lot more with more staff, but we're finding it very hard to even maintain what we're doing. That singly is our biggest challenge. A Community Services Programme position is for 19.5 hours over four days. People find that unattractive. If it was over three days, it would be more attractive.

## Have you any advice for those thinking of setting up a social enterprise?

You have to be part of a bigger organisation, for example, a rural development company, because you need governance, and you need supports. IRD Duhallow were able to give us a van to go out and collect the furniture. They were able to give us a premises. There is no doubt in the world that we would not be a success without IRD Duhallow. If you had to do all of the governance work yourself you would never have time to do the work the social enterprise was set up to do. It's too big.





# SOCIALLY SPEAKING!



Inishowen Dev P'ship  
@IDPInishowenDev

Everyone at IDP is delighted to be supporting the first @InishowenPride parade in Buncrana Inishowen this coming Sunday, June 5. With the weather set to be there will be no better place to be at 3pm this Sunday. #inishowenpride #allwelcomehere #we ❤️ inishowen



BrayAreaPartnership  
@BrayAreaPartner

Exquisite silk scarves painting today at our #SocialPrescribingBrayNorthWicklow Creative Social Cafe ☺️ #SICAP @Healthylreland Find out more about our Social Prescribing service here: [bit.ly/38S32nH](http://bit.ly/38S32nH) @pobal @theILDN @SunbeamHouse @NLNWicklow @SignalArtsCentr



Waterford Leader @WLPLeader · Jun 10

We're proud to be shortlisted as a #GoodCausesAwards County winner! Health & Wellbeing Category for the National Lottery Good Causes Awards on behalf of Waterford LEADER Partnership CLG Social Farming Programme.

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Galway Rural Development  
@galwayruraldev

We are proud to support the efforts of @portumnacomsch, under #SICAP, and their art at @portumnatownfc is good enough for @shorelinesarts. Check it out the next time you @VisitPortumna in @HeartlandsIRL. @DeptRCD @pobal @LPortumna @GalwayCoPPN



Portumna Community School @portumnacomsch · Jul 4

Well done LCA5 students who recently completed a super piece of community artwork @portumnatownfc under the guidance of well known street artist Grzegorz Wietrzynski 🎨 @VisitPortumna Sincere thanks to @galwayruraldev for part funding the project 🙌🏻 [youtu.be/RGGcubRbCv4](https://youtu.be/RGGcubRbCv4)



Cavan County Local Development @Breffni\_Int · Jun 13

Minister @HHumphreysFG met with our Rural Social Scheme (RSS) team at Dun na Rí Forest Park, Kingscourt. Under RSS we collaborate with @coiltenews, @cavancoco and the Local Community in keeping the Park a safe, clean and enjoyable place for visitors. #CCLD



FORUMConnemaraCLG @FORUMConnemara · Jun 15

FORUM staff delighted to be learning about remote working opportunities in EU #smartvillages #LEADER @GalValledAosta @FORUMConnemara @KilkennyLP @ravakka

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YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS  
#SocialISE