

April 2024

Hope & Ambition End-of-Year Narratives 2022-2023



Mount
Street
Club
Trust

Reflecting on Hope & Ambition 2022-2023



Hope & Ambition co-design meeting of participants and trustees, February 2024

Hope & Ambition is the Mount Street Club Trust's current funding and development initiative. Enlightened by the principles of trust-based philanthropy, Hope & Ambition empowers organisations to sustain innovative thinking and practice and evolve a critically-informed analysis in their work with marginalised and disadvantaged communities in the greater Dublin area.

Not just a funding programme, Hope & Ambition also provides development support to the participant organisations and their people, focusing in particular on organisational development, leadership, practice, wellbeing and cross-sectoral interaction. The initiative is structured around two key elements: a grant to the organisations and their commitment to participate in the CEOs and Practitioners Clubs in a spirit of critical inquiry, collaboration and shared learning.

The grant provided to each participant organisation is given as freely as possible, with the only requirement for reporting being the completion of end-of-year reports which are reflective in spirit. This document collates those reports - or narratives - written for the period July 2022 to December 2023. Also included are reflections on the reports from the perspective of the Trustees and Dr Liz Hayes who guides Hope & Ambition on behalf of the Trust.

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Irish Refugee Council



Irish Refugee Council, Youth Work Programme, August, 2022

The Irish Refugee Council provides services and support for people seeking protection and people recognised as refugees in Ireland and advocates for humane and dignified protection procedures and responses to people fleeing persecution. Through Hope & Ambition, the Mount Street Club Trust is helping to support the IRC's Youth Work Programme which supports young people to empower themselves, develop a sense of belonging and ensure their voices are heard through structured group work and one-to-one support.

The Irish Refugee Council's Youth Work Programme has been part of Mount Street Club Trust's Hope & Ambition project since 2019, initially for a three-year funding cycle followed by an 18-month transition phase. The IRC's youth work programme is run by two part-time youth workers (five days in total) and the funding from Hope & Ambition covers the salary costs for two days per week of this work. This report reflects on the challenges and achievements of the last 18 months (June 2022 to December 2023), the values and approaches underpinning our work, and concludes with some thoughts on the work going forward.

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Irish Refugee Council

Achievements, Highlights and Challenges

In 2022, for the first time, our youth work programme benefited from the experience, expertise and time of two youth workers. This resulted in a substantial increase in the number of young people supported through the programme as well as an increase in the number of projects, workshops and activities. Between June 2022 and December 2023, we ran five youth projects, 39 workshops, 12 activities and started providing monthly youth group drop-in sessions. In 2023, we responded to over 300 requests for one-to-one support, providing information, advice, advocacy and support to approximately 110 young people. Membership of our youth group increased substantially to 140 young people. Throughout the last 18 months, we have continued to build strong partnerships with other organisations, youth workers and facilitators including the YMCA, Creativity and Change, Rua Red and Venture Out. We also successfully applied for much needed grants which will enable us to sustain and develop our youth work programme in 2024.

We have had many highlights over the last 18 months. One that stands out is a camping trip in August 2022. In collaboration with Venture Out, we took a group of 12 young people on a three-day/two-night camping trip in Connemara. The focus was on mental wellbeing, building resilience and creating connection. It was an inspiring trip and one we are planning to do again this summer. Another highlight for us has been working with our group of Young Leaders. Daniel, Marwa, Hamid, Nike and Abdulai have emerged as inspirational young people, taking on a leading role in planning and delivering several workshops and activities, as well as representing IRC and the youth group at public events. We are really proud of all the work they do and are looking forward to continuing to work with them and grow this aspect of our programme.

We continue to face challenges in this work. The overall deterioration in reception conditions impacts on many of the young people we support, some of whom are forced to live in tents. Young men, over 18, who are currently arriving to seek protection face street homelessness. The increase in demand for support impacts on our limited capacity and it is a struggle for us to maintain the level of support needed to such high numbers. Finally, although we were successful with a number of funding applications in 2023, there were many more that were not granted. The stress of continuously needing to apply and secure funding is ongoing and impacts on our capacity to do the work.



IRC Young Leaders leadership coaching session, 2023



Connemara camping trip, 2022

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Irish Refugee Council

Values and Approaches

A core value and approach that has come to embody our work over the last 18 months is 'togetherness'. Togetherness is both a method and a value for us as colleagues, as practitioners and as participants in Hope & Ambition. As colleagues, togetherness is central to how we work as part of a team. As a team of two, working together is key to successfully carrying out all aspects of our work from applying for funding, to project design and co-facilitation. As we both have experience of doing this work alone, we have come to greatly appreciate the benefit of being part of a team and this is important when the work is tough, but also for celebrating achievements and successes.

As practitioners, togetherness is central to how we work with our youth group and young leaders. As a method, we strive to ensure that the young people we support have an active role in shaping the work we are doing and a strong sense of ownership over the group. As a value, we strive to ensure that our work builds connection and strengthens the young people's sense of belonging in the group, with their peers and in Ireland.

As participants in Hope & Ambition, we identify togetherness as both a core value underpinning the Clubs as well as a method by which we engage in the work. We physically come together for meetings, whether in person or on Zoom and these meetings are conducted in the spirit of togetherness, as practitioners and as people. What we strive to achieve with our youth group – a sense of belonging, of solidarity, of family – is also achieved through the Clubs, which provide us with space for reflection, connection, discussion and growth.

What Hope & Ambition means for the work now

Being part of Hope & Ambition is a real privilege for us and we are very grateful to the Mount Street Club Trust for believing in us and our work. Having a four-year funding commitment in place is important for us and means we can, in turn, ensure continuity in our one-to-one and project work. Hope & Ambition is not, however, only about the funding – we also benefit from participating in the Practitioners Club, which provides us with a supportive space to learn from one another, share challenges and celebrate each other's successes.

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Aoife Dare & Nick Henderson

Irish Refugee Council, Hope & Ambition participants:

Nick Henderson, CEO

Aoife Dare, Youth Worker

Natasha Muldoon, Youth Worker

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Intercultural Language Service



Intercultural Language Service, Summer Picnic, 2023

The Intercultural Language Service has established an innovative two-way model of integration and social inclusion between new and established communities in Dublin City. Free English language classes are provided by volunteers from the community within a welcoming and flexible learning environment. Running alongside the language classes, an evolving programme of events and collaborative projects promotes community-building, including the Intercultural Storytelling Project.

While there are always challenges surviving and thriving as an NGO in the social justice sector: claiming community space, fighting for funding etc., Intercultural Language Service has become, over the last eight years, an established part of the phalanx which welcomes, guides and helps New Irish people in Dublin's north inner city become more active citizens. Central to this success is an enthusiastic and committed core group of volunteers and the kernel of a future permanent staff represented by our Student Officer Nerija and our Tús intern Salec. Nerija, who was a member of our learner cohort and thus has insights and empathy for our clients' journeys, has been participating in the very successful Hope & Ambition Practitioners Club and personifies our hope for a more sustainable future workforce. Perhaps

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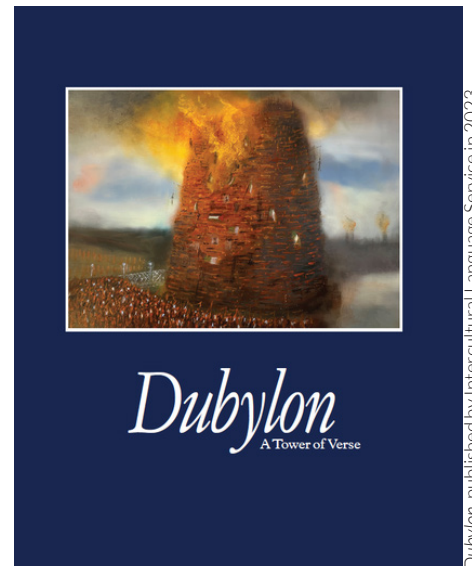
Intercultural Language Service

our greatest achievement has been the ability of our tutors to deal with the many fluctuations in new arrivals and how they are able to effortlessly handle the diverse needs of forty different cultures and as many again backgrounds.

The addition of two poets in residence at ILS, Fiona Bolger and Polina Cosgrave, and their brilliant work in producing a collaborative, poetic multilingual account of our members' lived experiences in Dublin called '*Dubylon*', which we published and launched in the James Joyce Centre in November 2023: this was certainly the highlight of our year. The fact that our poets will continue this work into the future bodes well for ILS intercommunity building going forward. In 2024, we plan to disseminate the work of *Dubylon* in public spaces such as libraries and other venues. Our work on intercultural narrative methods has been internationally recognised and will result in a large scale Erasmus+ project in 2024 involving organisations from five countries.

Despite our expertise, commitment and innovation in the area of language learning and interculturalism, including winning the European Language Label Award for learner engagement, ILS has met with some resistance from official and local groups in the north inner city. Over the last eighteen months, one official funder, having promised significant support and funding, has been extremely slow to follow up on this and has consistently moved the goalposts on agreed propositions. Another official training provider, after agreeing to meet and seek collaborations with us, backed off completely and in autumn 2023 decided to set up competing language classes in the premises where we have been working for eight years. We have experienced, at best, ambivalence from other local providers, perhaps jealous of the resources they have been receiving for many years even though there are significant resources available for community work in the north inner city. It must be noted, that the resolve and support of Dr Liz Hayes and the backing of the Mount Street Club Trust has been vital in weathering these battles both for me personally and for ILS as a whole.

In spite of the resistance to change and innovation mentioned above, we have met and started to increasingly collaborate with some like-minded local NGOs: Crosscultural Conversations, which grew as a resistance to the anti-refugee protests in East Wall, Dublin, and whose volunteers we trained to deliver language classes, and Mud Island Community Garden, where local New Irish can work the soil. We have already organised some activities



Dubylon, published by Intercultural Language Service in 2023



Boetry in Motion at Phizzfest 2022

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Intercultural Language Service

and events such as a guided visit to the Andy Warhol show at the Hugh Lane Gallery, and in 2024 we are planning an intercultural café where our members can serve global food to the community.

Our collaboration with the Mount Street Club Trust, through Hope & Ambition, has had a very positive impact in these testing times. During 2023, I have witnessed the power of the community of practice at our CEOs Club encounters. I have seen directors bring serious personal and organisational-threatening issues to the table and watched as they openly shared their anxieties and fears. I can attest that these accounts were met with warm, empathetic and rationally useful insights and solidarity from both our facilitator Liz Hayes and their fellow members of the Club. Previous to Hope & Ambition, we would have perhaps faced these threats and tests in isolation and experienced various levels of burnout and mental stress as a result.

The co-design approach we started to engage in toward the end of 2022, which resulted in sharpening our images of our strengths, missions and methodologies, is indicative of the power of the Mount Street Club Trust's trust-based way of doing philanthropy. The range of experiences and social capital that have been brought to bear from among the leaders and practitioners involved in Hope & Ambition has had a powerful impact on how we plan, work, organise and hope. Our work with Dr Hayes in co-designing has yielded insights and approaches for our organisations that otherwise may have passed us by.

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Peter Sheekey pictured with Liz Hayes

Intercultural Language Service,
Hope & Ambition participants:

Peter Sheekey, CEO

Nerija Gerbutaviciute, Student Officer

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Rua Red



Still from video call for applications for Rua Red's Traveller Artistic Residency, 2023

Rua Red is a contemporary art space and creative hub in Tallaght, South Dublin. In addition to a challenging programme of events, workshops, screenings and performances, Rua Red also supports creative organisations and individuals through the provision of office space, artist's studios and digital and recording facilities. In 2020, Rua Red joined Hope & Ambition, providing a residency to TraVision, a project seeking to establish a Traveller-led media company. Following the conclusion of the residency in 2022, Rua Red is continuing to work with Hope & Ambition to support a longer term Traveller presence at Rua Red through creative programming, partnerships and audience development.

The project aims to open artistic residencies to a wider range of individuals who would benefit from the support, resources, space and networks at Rua Red and wants to extend to Traveller community members.

With the assistance of the Mount Street Club Trust, we have developed a Traveller-led arts initiative guided by a steering group made up of individuals from within the Traveller community who bring a wide range of skills. We want to create a space where Traveller artists, activists, musicians,

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Rua Red

creatives and content makers are supported to make work in various formats such as digital, broadcast, video, photography, moving image, audio storytelling. We are now ready to roll out a series of residencies and artistic commissions that will have a physical space within Rua Red and will be supported and surrounded by a solid network of skilled arts and industry professionals who are also residents here.

2023 was a positive but challenging year for the project. We have had a series of delayed starts to the residency roll out, largely stemming from an awareness of the need to 'do it right', for the approach to be one that is reflective on both the needs of the participants and the systems and structures within the organisation. There are barriers and/or conditions that we are unaware of that we as an organisation need to rethink and challenge ourselves to do things differently. Much of the focus for the past year has been around creating an infrastructure for the project that is robust and supports the needs of the Traveller artists.

We have learned through phase one, that there are inherent contradictions in the meeting of a settled organisational culture and Traveller culture. We were largely unaware of the complexity of many of the barriers and yet, through our systems and structures, acted as keepers of these barriers too. We have had to rethink 'how we work' as an organisation. We are open to this change, and very glad of the support and mentoring from Dr Liz Hayes on behalf of the Trust through this process. We have a better understanding of Traveller culture, so with whatever comes next, it will be Traveller-led; we want to explore new approaches to residencies, to rules and boundaries. The initiative has had a massive impact on us, pushing us to rethink our organisation's structure, language, policy, flexibility; and to ask questions: Who are the 'keepers'? Where is 'ownership'?

Achievements to date include the formation of a steering committee and the appointment of Oein DeBharduin as committee chair. Oein is an established poet and writer, activist, educator and administrator. Oein is also the co-founder of LGBT Tara (Traveller and Roma Alliance). Oein has published 'Why the Moon Travels' (2020) and 'Twiggy Woman' (2023); both books are a collection of folktales from the Irish Traveller community retold. A series of meetings with the steering committee chair have proved invaluable and have greatly assisted in creating more awareness and cultural understanding of the Traveller community.

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Rua Red

The other members of the steering committee are Rosaleen McDonagh - writer and playwright, Trish Reilly - vocalist and multi-instrumentalist, Maggie Mc Donagh of the National Traveller Mental Health Network, and Sharyn Ward - singer and performer.

We are currently drafting a new 'manifesto' and strategy for Rua Red with much greater insight and awareness about our responsibility to be inclusive and be shaped by that experience.

A key learning is around the structure of the residency period itself. Artistic residencies are traditionally for fixed blocks of time within a space. We have devised a pilot system for the first round of residencies with the aim of tailoring the programme to the needs of individuals from the Traveller community who may need more flexibility around time commitments. With this in place we can support the individual artists to devise their own timing within the space here.

The outcome of the steering committee meetings formed the basis for the application process. Key areas devised to break down barriers for people to apply include:

- Allowing for multiple application formats: applications can be written, however video or audio/voice note applications are also possible. The steering committee felt that WhatsApp is a known and tried medium used within the community.
- A series of short videos by members of the steering committee, who are known to the Traveller community will encourage hard to reach individuals to apply. The steering committee could make short info videos that could be shared via WhatsApp.
- An open day will be scheduled with the participants that will give them the opportunity to become more familiar with the staff and facilities available to them – travel expenses to come to the open day will be provided.

We are working on sourcing advice so that we can be clear on the impact that residency fees/stipend can have on social welfare entitlements. The first call for applications will be launched on February 1st, St Brigid's Day, an important day in Traveller culture marking the beginning of spring in the traditional Irish calendar; an important festival for our rural ancestors as it ushered in a new season of hope and growth after a long, dark winter.



Rua Red, South Dublin Arts Centre



Hope & Ambition meeting at Rua Red

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Rua Red

The first video from Oein and Maoliosa explains the residency concept and invites applications from Traveller creatives with a deadline of 29 March (the start of the Traveller new year).

We are very excited about the months ahead and experiencing the work that emerges out of the residency programme. There will be challenges and learning that comes from that. The dedicated holistic support that Mount Street Club Trust offers is invaluable and enables us to take on this work in a way that is reflective and meaningful, ultimately creating better outcomes for all involved.

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Maoliosa Boyle & Joyce Dunne

Rua Red, Hope & Ambition participants:

Executive Director, Maoliosa Boyle

Development Manager, Joyce Dunne

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Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation



Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation, Hope & Ambition Project, 2022

The Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation works to prevent and transform political and inter-communal conflict and build peaceful, inclusive societies. Within Glencree’s Intercultural and Refugee Programme, the Hope & Ambition Project works with women living in or moving out of direct provision, aiming to build their confidence and sense of safety through community circle and Capacitar wellness practices.

During the period of June 2022 to December 2023, the project actions were guided by the conversations held as part of the co-design process with Mount Street Club Trust and other Hope & Ambition participants. Feedback received at the various forums and reflective workshops helped to focus the direction of the work. Key elements of the plan included:

1. Developing a capacity building/leadership component in the Clondalkin Towers women’s group and connecting the group with wider networks in the local area.
2. Using learning from the work in Clondalkin Towers over the past six years to replicate the model in a newer direct provision centre.
3. Extending the work to the City West area by making connections with Ukrainian women housed at City West Hotel.

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Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation

This phase of the project featured considerable change and development of the project featuring:

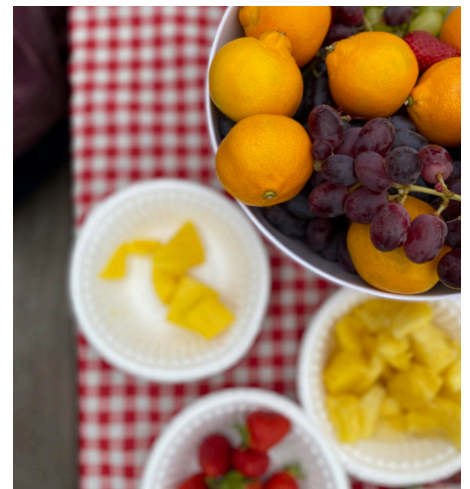
- Consolidation of the work that we have been involved in over many years in Clondalkin Towers where we continued to hold a presence for women to come together in a supportive environment. Opportunities for connection and creativity were explored through collaboration with the National Women's Collective in Ronanstown.
- Expansion of the work to a new direct provision centre in Milltown, following the transfer of people from the Red Cow Hotel in Clondalkin. A women's group was set up in this centre, drawing on the model of Refugee Accompaniment and wellness practices developed by Capacitar International used in the Clondalkin Towers.
- Through relationship building with a small group of Ukrainian women at the City West Hub, people from this centre were integrated into a series of programme activities.



Glencree Hope & Ambition Project, Picnic in Corkagh Park, 2022

It has also been a time of considerable upheaval and insecurity in the wider context:

- People are being moved more frequently from one centre to another or transferred to homeless services. A clear pattern is emerging of people initially securing private accommodation and settling into communities, only to lose tenancy at a later stage as landlords leave the market.
- Global events weigh heavily on our minds and hearts. In 2022, the UNHCR announced that we had surpassed the 100 million mark for total displacement, meaning that over 1.2% of the global population have been forced to leave their homes (UNHCR 2023).
- At home, growing hostility towards asylum seekers intensifies. The housing crisis and the influence of far-right political movements fuel division within and between marginalised communities. These events take place in a context where Ireland achieved one of the highest growth rates in the euro area in 2021-22. (European Commission Economic and Finance E-news).



Activities at Clondalkin Towers, June 2022 to December 2022

- Women's group meetings: exercises for wellness and relaxation, connection and emotional support were held in the centre on 25th July (19 women), September (15 women), October 3rd (5 women), November (6 women).

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Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation

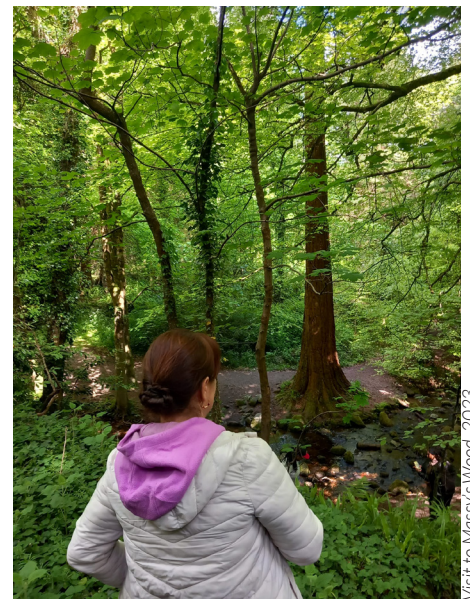
- A picnic at the playground in Corkagh Park took place on 13th of June with food and toys for outdoor games provided. (20 women/children)
- Presentation by An Cosán Adult Education Centre on 4th of July providing information on courses available both online and in person (15 women).
- Distribution of picnic packs on Monday 18th of July to help women make use of outdoor spaces in the locality.
- Trip to the Zoo on 15th of August (27 adults and 26 children)
- Capacitar Training Sponsorship – As part of our aim to improve the capacity of the group and develop leadership skills, one woman was sponsored to do Capacitar Basic Training (www.capacitar.ie) for wellness and trauma healing over four weekends starting in November 2022.
- Trip to Pantomime in Civic Theatre – On 12th of December, a group of 30 (women/ children) attended the Sleeping Beauty Pantomime in Tallaght which proved to have a universal appeal despite cultural and language barriers.
- A Christmas coffee morning was held in the Clondalkin Towers and small gifts with an invitation to attend the next meeting were distributed to all women in the centre (approximately 120).

Activities at Clondalkin Towers in 2023

- Six Women's Group meetings were held in the centre in January (13 women) February (12 women), April (8 women), May (10 women), June (9 women), and September (10 women).
- Day Trip to An Tairseach Ecology Centre in Wicklow Town on 13th of March. We gathered for a presentation on the impact of climate change and the reasons for setting up the centre as an organic farm. The women shared their own experiences of farming practices and the crops grown in their countries of origin. We did a tour of the farm and had lunch together with an international group of people who were studying at An Tairseach. (11 women)
- Trip to Massy's Wood and Traveller Project in Mutton Lane on 15th of May. This trip brought together 11 women from the Clondalkin Towers and 6 Ukrainian women from City West Hotel. It was our first attempt to integrate some Ukrainian women into the programme. We walked in the woods, practised Tai Chi together under the trees, went for lunch, and visited a Traveller Project nearby. (17 women).
- Picnic in Corkagh Park- on 10th July. We invited Ukrainian women



Visit to Mutton Lane Traveller project, 2023



Visit to Massy's Wood, 2023

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Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation

and children from City West to join us again. We were also joined by women and children who have moved out of Direct Provision wanting to reconnect with old friends. Despite torrential rain, we had fun together and received many messages of gratitude from women from all locations. (10 from City West, 11 women from the Towers, 17 from other locations).

- Day Trip to Emerald Park- on 31st of July- (over 100 women and their children). This event was led by Marie Williams of Young Mother's Network (a Dominican Justice Project), supported by Louise Keating and Glencree volunteer Maureen O Riordain. It involved women from Clondalkin Towers and other women who have moved out into communities around Dublin/Louth/Kildare.
- Additional Support for Individuals
- We provided additional support to individuals at times of particular need e.g. emergency hospital visit, one-to-one support and references for asylum applications and landlords.
- Collaboration with the National Women's Collective, Ronanstown: Connection Through Crafts Project

Connection Through Crafts Project

With a view to strengthening the capacity of the group, we developed a relationship with the National Women's Collective in Ronanstown who have a long history of supporting women in this locality. Through this connection, women from Clondalkin Towers could access the range of activities run by the collective. By sharing our experiences and expertise, both organisations could learn from each other. We discussed the idea of a collaborative venture using the medium of crafts. Ronanstown Women's Collective took the lead on writing a funding application to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, citing Glencree as a partner in an initiative they entitled "Connection Through Crafts Project". This funding enabled them to employ a tutor and provide additional funds for programme activities over a six-month period. Using the non-verbal medium of crafts ensured the participation of women who don't speak English. We planned to integrate the wellness exercises into the sessions, combined with crafts, outings and an education piece.

The first session of this new project was held on the 9th of October (14 women). We distributed packs of materials to women and a tutor provided a crochet demonstration. Further gatherings were held in November and December.



Connection Through Crafts Project



Connection Through Crafts Project

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Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation

Christmas crafts packs containing wool and crochet hooks were distributed to all 120 women in Clondalkin Towers and women started to send us photos of their creations. At this point, most of the women we had been working with for years had moved on and a whole new population of arrivals moved in. We hope that this project will help us get to know the newcomers.

Extending the model to a New Direct Provision Centre in Milltown

- In February 2023 approximately 300 people were relocated from the Red Cow Hotel in Clondalkin to a newly established Direct Provision Centre at the former Marist seminary Mount St. Mary's in Milltown. Louise secured permission from the management to visit the centre, meeting people in an informal way in the communal areas. As a way of reaching out to women in this new centre, a series of outreach events were held in the main dining room:
- International Women's Day outreach in Milltown on 7th of March- Small gifts of cosmetics and fresh dates from Clonskeagh Mosque were offered to women as a means of starting a conversation about setting up a women's group. 14 women expressed an interest in the group and offered their contact details.
- Follow up outreach took place on 27th of March and again on 4th of April in the open dining area after breakfast, where Louise met 26 women informally.
- Start of Women's Group - Gradually the work moved to a private room and communication commenced by individual text messaging and through the residents WhatsApp group. Women's group meetings were held on 7th of May (10 participants), 22nd of May (5 women), 26th of June (12 women), 25th of July - (6 women), 23rd of August (5 women), 23rd of September (6 women), 24th of October (8 women), 28th of November (9 women). Small self-care gifts were distributed to 30 women at Christmas.

Connecting with women in City West Hotel

The City West hub was set up in response to people fleeing the war in Ukraine, but also housing other international protection applicants on a short-term basis. Glencree volunteer Maureen O'Riordain applied to South Dublin Volunteer Centre and became a volunteer in the hub, assisting with the arrivals process. Through her work in this capacity, Maureen developed a relationship with some Ukrainian residents now housed in a separate section, at the City West Hotel. Through this connection a group of six women were invited to come on a day trip to Massy's Wood with a group



Visit to An lairseach, 2022

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Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation

of women from Clondalkin Towers. Connections developed and Ukrainian women took part in further Glencree Programme activities including a trip to the Abbey Theatre and a picnic in Corkagh Park, Clondalkin. In December, Louise and Maureen consulted with key women to discuss what they would like in terms of further interaction. They expressed an interest in attending the 'Gifted' design fair at the RDS. A trip was organised on 8th of December for 15 women. Louise was invited to attend the Christmas concert organised by the Ukrainian community on December 23rd and connected again with this group of women.

Developments within the wider Glencree Intercultural and Refugee Programme

As an outcome of the Hope & Ambition Project, Glencree has been able to build on the work of Hope & Ambition to extend this model of working to other centres in Dublin and Wicklow, developing and funding another project entitled "Glencree Welcomes", supported by a contracted Capacitar-trained consultant, teaching tools for wellness and trauma healing in other centres, particularly in rural isolated areas near Glencree itself.

Trust-Based Philanthropy

During this period, thanks to the security and flexibility afforded by the funding arrangements with Mount Street Club Trust and personal support provided through the Practitioners Club and CEOs Club, a different quality of work emerged. Characterised by focusing on the evolving needs and interests of participants, we were enabled to make use of opportunities that emerged, whilst not letting go of the strategic direction of the project. Had roles and activity plans been tightly prescribed by a different funding arrangement, this would not have been possible. Committing to a small focused series of actions, with an integrated reflective process with other organisations, offers a window into the lives of marginalised groups of people struggling to make a life in the Ireland of today. We look forward to harnessing the learning from this experience in collaboration with other groups who wish to use the experience of grassroots work to influence change in both the philanthropic community and with policy makers.

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Naomh McNamee, Louise Keating & Nadette Foley

Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation, Hope & Ambition participants:

Naomh McNamee, CEO

Louise Keating, Hope & Ambition Project Lead

Nadette Foley, Intercultural & Refugee Programme Manager

A group of people is sitting on a rocky ledge in the foreground, looking out over a vast, flat landscape. The landscape is a mix of brown and tan tones, suggesting a dry or semi-arid environment. In the distance, there are several rounded mountains or hills under a cloudy sky. The overall scene is serene and contemplative. The text "Reflections on the End-of-Year Narratives" is overlaid in white, bold font, with a red horizontal line underneath it.

Reflections on the End-of-Year Narratives

Reflections on the End-of-Year Narratives 2022-2023

Dr Liz Hayes, Corporate Community



Hope & Ambition co-design meeting of participants and trustees, February 2024

Hope & Ambition is guided by organisational development expert Dr Liz Hayes of Corporate Community on behalf of the Mount Street Club Trust. Liz provides strategic advice, direction and mentoring, as well as facilitating the CEOs and Practitioners Clubs. These reflections are structured in two parts: Liz's own report to the Trustees on the end-of-year narratives, and a summary of the Trustees' reflections on the narratives.

Introduction

The four work narratives written by the Hope & Ambition participants invite us into a world where the challenges of inclusion work are sharply felt and provoke the need for further system-wide thinking and engagement. The extent of the work that has been delivered is impressive in such volatile work and funding environments and with relatively small resources in face of the vast scale of need.

Outcomes

The sense of 'togetherness' among the Hope & Ambition participants has grown stronger over the last eighteen months. Since the joint planning work towards the end of 2022 there has been a sense of a shift in momentum for the influencing and collective endeavour.

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The conversations within the CEOs and Practitioners Clubs have demonstrated the sense of support and validation that comes from being facilitated in safe psychological spaces where practice challenges and achievements are mined for further insight.

Self-care and wellbeing in leadership and practitioner roles are often talked about as being necessary to avoid isolation and burn-out. Within Hope & Ambition, the emphasis is on seeing how our lives interconnect, how different stages of life impact on the roles we take up and why we make the choices we make in response to a given context.

The trust engendered through these conversations is key to helping to frame issues differently and create safe havens for doing work that depends on harnessing networks and making room for new experiments and ideas.

The next four years

These end-of-year narratives are part of the process to refine each organisation's work plan for the new four-year phase of Hope & Ambition. These plans become the means of articulating the commitments and the scope of work that will form the contract with the Trust. With that in mind, and as we continue to negotiate what's possible, I would highlight the following five themes:

Extended networks

The reports perhaps do not fully reflect the ways in which the practice of exchange of ideas and resources and increasing collaboration is becoming more of a norm among the Hope & Ambition participants. Rua Red's Executive Director Maoliosa Boyle attested to this in an email following the submission of their narrative:

"We haven't mentioned the other projects that have developed because of Hope & Ambition: the project with Array Collective, Glencree and the Ukrainian Community and the installation by Morag Myerscough and the Irish Refugee Council Youth Group. Both projects have made such a massive impact on Rua Red and how we deliver and produce work. They would not have happened without Hope & Ambition. Collaboration and guidance is key."

Support and togetherness.

In the Intercultural Language Service narrative, Peter Sheekey, the



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CEO, draws attention to the deepening bond at the CEOs Club and their increasing ability to be in solidarity with each other as CEOs in challenging environments. He speaks openly of the challenges of working with local collaborators and how competition and an inability to see the work beyond an application form makes it more difficult to address the needs of people seeking refuge and wanting to make a life in Ireland. On the other hand, the assistance of a local Community Employment operator secured a CE placement for a former ILS student, Nerija, as ILS's Student Officer. Nerija has joined the Practitioners Club and makes an invaluable contribution in helping the group to understand the importance of having a sense of belonging, support and community.

The Irish Refugee Council's focus on 'togetherness' and the added value of now having two youth workers is also drawing an increasing focus to the need for safe community-based environments where people can flourish and make new connections.

Rhythm of activity

The developmental practices described in the narratives are not primarily organised via timetables and rosters. The Traveller owned and advised arts initiative in Rua Red indicates the importance of taking 'the time to do it right' and go at the pace of people's busy lives. For Glencree, the work is often upended by women being moved around the asylum system at short notice. Having the autonomy to be able to catch people at the right moment or quickly change how things are done is vital. This freedom nourishes wider trust and an ability to stay relevant to needs and new opportunities.

Four years on, and with a commitment to more of the same, the vote of confidence that the participants receive from the Trust is more of a game changer than we realised.

A game changer

The decision to keep a focus on the current recipients and extend the initiative will further maximise the potential for inviting others to think about the relational practices that strengthen solidarity and cooperation. Hope & Ambition also helps participants to leverage other funding and form new partnerships, for example between Glencree and the National Women's Collective in Ronanstown.

As we embark on this new phase of Hope & Ambition, the groundwork that enabled all those new collaborations can now be used to nourish further development and longevity in the work.



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Needs and challenges

These narratives highlight the challenges faced by Travellers, refugees, asylum seekers and new Irish communities. They also speak to the challenges faced by the organisations themselves. Against this backdrop, the CEOs and Practitioners Clubs offer a safety net. They can be enjoyed as a space for honest conversions, mutual support and creating a critical lens on the wider context.

The work can be overwhelming and engender anger and frustration with how inadequate the available resources are to tackle the scale of needs. However, there is also a sense of public/system-level resources not being used wisely or being used in ways that aren't relevant to people's needs. Founded on the support and engagement of the first four years of Hope & Ambition, the participants are eager to further their thinking around how their work can contribute to systemic change.

Conclusion

We're in a good spot!

From my role, now extended to engaging with potential funding partners, I too can feel frustrated at times - particularly on those days when trust-based practices in philanthropy feel niche and far from wider adoption. The support of the Trustees is vital to keep me sane and match fit too!

As the intention is to add new organisations to Hope & Ambition, we have been undertaking a number of exploratory conversations. One such conversation was with Miriam Spollen, founder of Connection Arts Centre. Her passion for assisting people with intellectual disabilities to have autonomy and rights in Irish society can sometimes feel like a niche interest in the context of wider disability services provision. This added to our sense that intellectual disability voices can easily go missing or become invisible and we hope to be able to explore this further and amplify those voices through the next phase of Hope & Ambition, building on the work of Blossom Ireland who participated in the first phase up to their closure in 2022.

Due to the nature of the Mount Street Club Trust, the Trustees take up a more active and engaged role than is common. Their interest and contribution is vital and is as important as the resources and supports offered through my role. We are all very excited to see how Hope & Ambition will evolve over the next few months, and indeed over the next four years.

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Reflections on the End-of-Year Narratives 2022-2023

The Trustees of the Mount Street Club Trust



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We as the Trustees of the Mount Street Club Trust were delighted with the end-of-year narratives that marked a further transition to Hope & Ambition Phase Two, starting this year. The reports gave a good sense of the work being done and provided valuable food for thought for us. Hope & Ambition clearly continues to be a valuable support to the work of addressing exclusion and helping people to make a life in Ireland.

Critical insights

New questions emerged in our conversations following the review of the narratives, framed by the diverse experiences among us. Through dialogue these questions become a means to generate further thinking and deepen the knowledge of what we are trying to do. Our approach is not about looking for problems but rather nudging the thinking in a direction where these questions might resonate and lead to further cycles of inquiry.

These questions highlight an ongoing interest in ensuring that Hope & Ambition remains rooted in addressing needs and maximising the potential for connection and collaboration in all aspects of the work of the Trust:

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- *In what ways can we show how the connections made and the whole experience of Hope & Ambition changes ways of thinking and working over time?*
- *What can we say about the consequences for empowerment and inclusion work when NGOs are driven into service provision in order to access longer-term funding?*
- *By offering trust, support and opportunities for intra-organisational learning, what does Hope & Ambition make possible that a standalone grant cannot?*

Some highlights

Overall, we were excited to read about work expansion and new initiatives that arise as the work evolves over time, such as the call for Traveller creatives to engage with Rua Red. While each organisation clearly has its own culture and methods of working, there seems to be a congruence of values and a shared sense of mutual interest and respect. It's exciting to hear of emerging collaborations arising directly from getting to know each other through the peer support of Hope & Ambition. We noted the staying power and ingenuity of Intercultural Language Service, and their honesty in characterising the challenges they face. Indeed, we valued highly the honesty of all the reports which offer deeper insights into the nature of the work and its challenges, as well as the achievements.

A harsh environment

The level of people movement and the harshness of an under-resourced response to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees prompted concern from all of us. Comparisons were made to what has happened in the Traveller community in different ways. We find it hard to contend with the reality that people seeking international protection, men in particular, young and old, are living in tents in the middle of the city.

Concern regarding getting overwhelmed

Experience of day-to-day work in communities and helplessness in the face of systemic challenges, as reflected in the individual narratives and in some of our own experiences, brought a sobering effect to our conversations. Funding insecurities make the work even harder and the current context was described as frightening.

We reflected that philanthropy can sometimes be characterised with an interest in the 'shiny, glittery and new' and subsequently experienced as



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an apparent mistrust of those who have been doing (mostly) good work for years. A strategy of ongoing collaboration and longer-term funding can also be harder to legitimise in the face of the tyranny of 'innovation' and having to present the near-perfect organisation to funders. In a similar vein, at a recent US Trust-Based Philanthropy Project webinar, it was suggested that non-profit leaders find themselves involved in 'glorified essay writing contests' that effectively take them away from the complexities of leading and supporting their own staff in organisations.

There was consensus among us that issues of competition come up time and again between organisations and agencies. Cooperation is talked about a great deal, but is never fully realised. This seems to play out particularly in the contexts of bureaucracy, power and the distribution of resources.

Another angle on the 'long haul'

The Mount Street Club Trust is committed to being 'in it for the long haul'. In that context, trustee Paul Donovan referenced an article that has stayed in his mind for many years, 'On the Folly of Rewarding A While Hoping for B', from the Academy of Management Journal, circa 1975. It's interesting to ponder that some things never change. We firmly believe that addressing long-term, complex problems cannot be achieved through persistently short-term funding cycles. As we reflect back on the first four years of Hope & Ambition and prepare to embark on the next four-year funding cycle, we are emboldened in our belief that those brave organisations seeking to address issues of exclusion and marginalisation in our society need sustained, secure and flexible long-term support. We hope that we will be able to use our influence over the next four years of Hope & Ambition to secure more widespread adoption of this approach among the Irish philanthropy community.

A future shaped by enquiry and learning

One of our new trustees commented that when she joined the Trust she was pleased to find she had become part of a learning organisation. She could not have given us a greater compliment. In the context of the wider philanthropy and regulatory environment, our intention is to be constantly open to learning as well as flexible, responsive to the changing context and supportive to all our partners and to each other. We are excited to see how Hope & Ambition develops over the next four years, for ourselves and for our participant organisations, confident that it will prompt new thinking and avenues for enquiry and learning beyond what we can currently anticipate.

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You can follow the progress of Hope & Ambition on our website: www.mountstreetclubtrust.ie

