



DARNDALE BELCAMP **INTEGRATED CHILDCARE SERVICES**

With Help from The Ireland Funds, Ireland's largest community children's centre provides safe, supportive care.

The Darndale Belcamp Integrated Childcare Service (DBIC)

is the largest community childcare centre in Ireland, catering for 267 children aged 0-12 years in disadvantaged communities. The centre is designed to give the children every chance to get a good start in life through high quality, safe, affordable and inclusive childcare aimed at promoting the physical, emotional, social and educational wellbeing of all children. DBIC provides vulnerable children a place to learn and play in a safe environment where they eat healthy breakfasts and lunches, participate in a school readiness programme and benefit from an active after-school group that promotes positive behaviour and play.

Thanks to grants from The Ireland Funds, in particular The Australian Ireland Fund and The Ireland Fund of Germany, DBIC has been able to retain a Project Worker to supplement the staff. It is the only Community Childcare Provider or crèche in Ireland with a Project Worker on site. They are



healthy start



safe space

A photograph of two young girls sitting on a playground structure. The girl on the left has red hair and is wearing a red patterned jacket with Hello Kitty designs. The girl on the right has blonde hair and is wearing a dark grey jacket. They are both smiling warmly at the camera. The background is slightly blurred, showing the blue and red metal bars of the playground equipment.

immediately available for any child and their family and this is fundamental to ensuring that an intervention can begin as soon as possible.

“We’re very fortunate to have organisations like The Ireland Funds that are willing to fund something like this,” says Tracy, the Project Worker at DBIC. “This is a big centre and you can really see the changes in families since the demise of the Celtic Tiger. Children are coming in with more behavioral issues because of stress at home and my role allows me to intervene early and help them get the necessary services.”

The Centre in the Darndale community has a particular need for this service due to the fact that their children are more likely to witness substance misuse, violence, and other traumatic events. In 2012, eleven children at Darndale lost a parent to drugs or suicide.

A photograph of two young children, likely boys, in a classroom or playroom. They are both smiling and holding brown and white stuffed monkey toys. The child on the left is in the foreground, looking towards the camera. The child on the right is slightly behind, looking off to the side. The background shows colorful shelves and educational materials.

Children are children regardless of where they come from. They deserve the best chance they can get. —Kelda Barnes, Centre Manager

Some of our children have a parent in prison and are being cared for by grandparents or the wider family,” explains Kelda Barnes, Centre Manager at Darndale. “Children can sometimes come in hungry and in one case we had two siblings age 4 and 5 who came in not knowing what a fork or spoon were because they were raised on bottles. But those children are doing beautifully now because of the work in the Centre.”

Project workers at Darndale will work with some children for several years. Their cases are reviewed quarterly with staff, parents and a Darndale Project Worker. There are also children in the wider Darndale Childcare Centre that are linked with a Project Worker, who is able to provide advice to the child’s core staff team on how best to support him or her in the classroom. They work with the child either individually or in a small group to tackle a wide range of issues that include emotional, social or behavioral problems or trauma leading from sexual, emotional or physical abuse.

A woman with short dark hair, glasses, and a pink scarf is smiling. She is wearing a dark red sweater. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an outdoor setting with a yellow wall and a metal railing.

Any child over the age of 2 ½ years may visit the Project Worker and in addition to support for children, the Project Worker will provide advice for their parents on working with the child to address the issue in a positive manner.

“Having funding for our Project Worker to supplement staff here has been essential,” says Kelda. “The Ireland Funds have made this possible and it has lifted a massive weight off our shoulders. We were running out of funding options for that position and now we are hugely thankful. Children are children regardless of where they come from. They deserve the best chance they can get.”

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Darndale Belcamp Integrated Childcare

What is lovely is to see children coming through the Centre and succeeding. You know you've supported them and been there at the right time.—*Kelda Barnes, Principal*

