

St Ultans Integrated Care & Education Campus – Cherry Orchard

Incorporating St Ultans Primary School & St Ultans Childcare Project

St Ultans is an Integrated Care and Education model, in response to the needs of the children of Cherry Orchard. It is a campus for Cherry Orchard, not just in Cherry Orchard. St Ultans caters primarily for the population of Cherry Orchard A & C electoral areas.

Cherry Orchard is a very disadvantaged community, from its inception in the 1980's, with 80% of the children attending living in the lowest quartile of disadvantage. Children grow up in a community that suffers from trauma, addiction, unemployment, high anti-social behaviour, and poor and uncoordinated planning (that still continues today, 150 new homes in 2022, with 1,800 more planned). This trauma plays out in the lives of children and presents as behaviour issues and self-esteem issues for the children, and they grow up with little hope. This trauma play outs for the community, in addiction, unemployment, anti-social behaviour, fear and mistrust of authority.

The founders of St Ultan's who were community based recognised that a different approach was required to tackle the needs of Cherry Orchard. In looking for a solution, no precedent in Ireland could be found. International models of best practice were harnessed. Education was recognised as the key to breaking disadvantage but the social problems that existed were a major factor that took away from the drive to be educated. From there came the model of a care and education approach to meeting the needs of children and breaking the cycle of disadvantage. A formal Government decision in 2007 was instrumental in the setup of the campus.

Over the last 16 years a multi-disciplinary team of teachers, special needs assistants, care & early year practitioners, therapists and community service staff have developed a model of working closely with each other and with other health and social care professionals and service providers with the objective of providing a combined and consistent education, care and support model for all children and families of this area.

Early intervention is the most cost effective way to help break the cycle of disadvantage, to help each child fulfil their potential, and to reduce the long term cost of social problems such as unemployment, social housing, addictions, anti-social behaviour and juvenile and adult crime.

St Ultans primary school is the only school in Cherry Orchard and a DEIS band 1 school, catering for 370 children. In September 2014, St Ultans opened three classes for children with autism (ASD), some of who integrate with mainstream school classes.

Our Model

The St Ultans model is an integrated holistic wraparound service for the child. We meet the holistic needs of children and young people through our unique integrated approach of education and care that includes:

- An **Early Education** centre on campus with strong co-operation between early education practitioners and Primary School teachers, creating a smoother and more school-ready transfer of children to primary school – currently catering for 92 children , planned to increase to 130 next year
- A **Care Service** offering social care support across campus both during the school day and an after school service for those identified as most at risk and allowing for programmes to be put in place for children with high needs – 52 complex children in receipt of care service each year, with a further 40 requiring play therapy.
- **Interagency networking** – both within Saint Ultan's and with external agencies.
- **Continuous learning** – Catering for children from as young as 3 months to 18 years and beyond. In addition supporting **parents & families** through courses within our resource capacity.
- **Culture and Arts** – a unique music and arts programme that aims to foster creativity within each child. This is open to the entire community, using our premises in a way that the Programme for Government urges.

- **School Meals** Addressing hunger and nutrition deficit through a nutritious hot meal programme for every child, prepared and delivered from our kitchen, efficiently and safely.
- **Local Employment** A policy of employing local staff within our Community Services Team, and in the Care and Education areas when suitably qualified staff is available. Care Services employs 57 staff and has an annual budget of €1.8m
- **Parental support** programmes.

We have been acknowledged and funded by various voluntary agencies, (**Dept of Children is our main funder**) and high profile philanthropic donors that acknowledge the uniqueness of St Ultan's and without whose support the campus would not be able to provide the level of support that it does for the children, families and the Community of Cherry Orchard. The Campus has 3 campus managers covering care service, finance/facilities & school principal.

The St Ultan's experience has informed the Limerick regeneration model, the North East Inner City working group and can provide similar benefit to other disadvantaged areas and to other organisations that wish to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach. It can also be a model for educational inclusion.

St Ultan's meets the aims of the Programme for Government

- We support the prioritisation of early years by provision of low cost affordable quality childcare, and apply a policy of early intervention for the child.
- We work with and support young people educationally and socially to give them the best chance in life so as to break the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage.
- Promoting excellence and innovation in school by use of progressive and innovative approaches in implementing the Primary Curriculum and evidence informed programmes.
- We aim to tackle disadvantage in everything we do, and empower children and parents so that they can create a better future for themselves.
- We already make extended use of our building at evenings and weekends.

What we would like to happen

Breaking the cycle of disadvantage, and in particular intergenerational disadvantage, requires an integrated approach. Working through the education system on its own is not sufficient. The needs of children and young people can only be met through a multi and interagency approach. St Ultan's campus provides a holistic approach to meeting the needs of children. We can break the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage if we are resourced to do so.

St Ultan's needs resources to consolidate an integrated care and education approach. Demand for care services exceeds the allowed quota. Managers and staff work to an integration agenda, in addition to their other duties. The campus has two boards simply because it is restricted by the Education Act.

We would therefore ask the committee to consider the following

- The committee come and visit St Ultans, it is best experienced in person.
- We need to be properly resourced to support the children of Cherry Orchard including access to a multi-disciplinary team on site in St Ultans. (Our current fixed state funding in an inflationary environment is a risk to the sustainability of our service offering)
- Support to work with parents & families to enhance the work that we do with the children.
- The model of integrated care & education is formally recognised by government.
- The government provide a targeted holistic co-ordinated approach to the area of Cherry Orchard, rather than individual uncoordinated responses at present.
- We need political support and action to renew our mission in the challenging times ahead

Thank you for your time and attention.

<https://www.stultanscampus.ie/>