



Identifying, Exploring and Evaluating Gaps in Current Provision for Irish-medium Youth Work in Belfast

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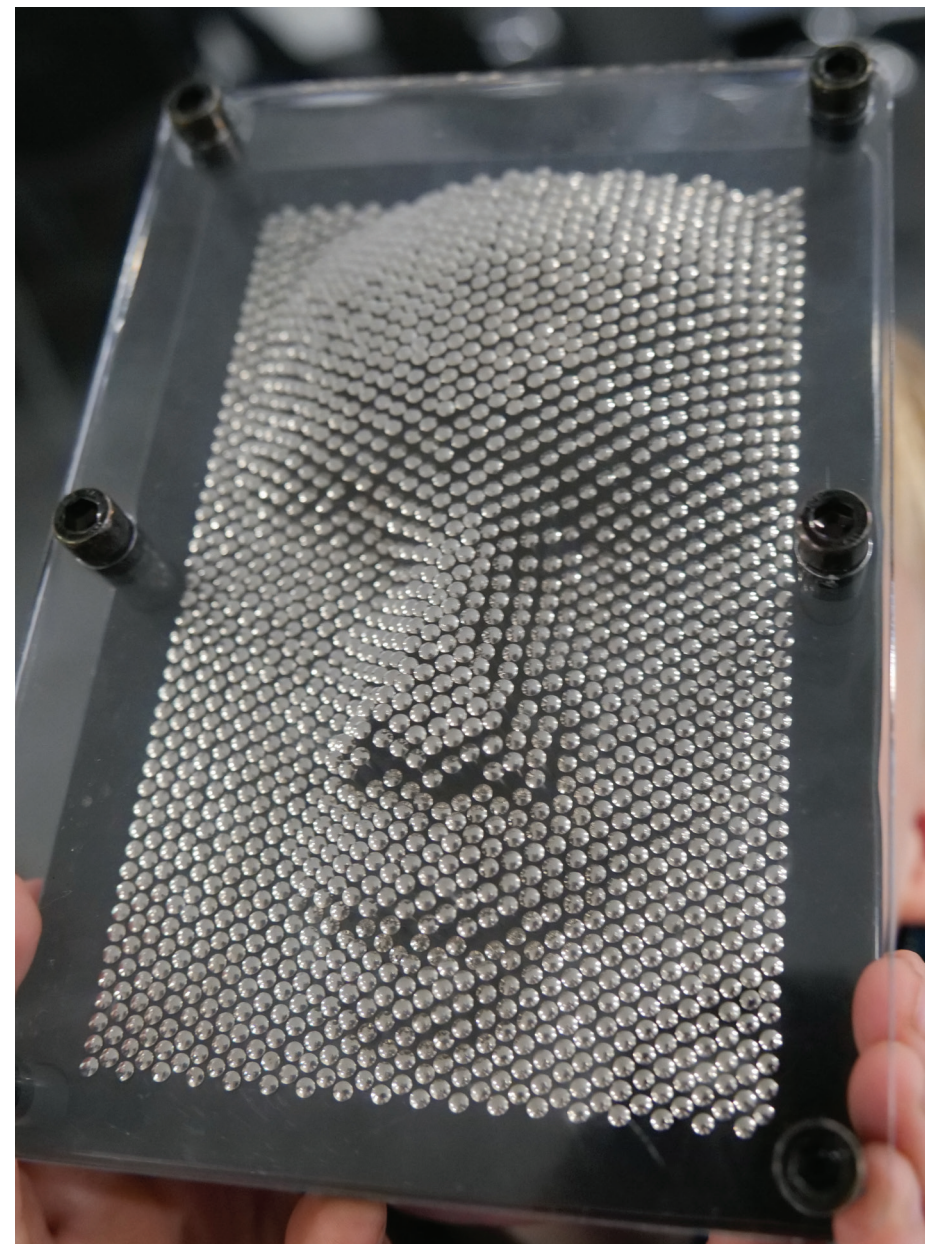
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Buíochas

Ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil le Glór na Móna agus leis an fhoireann stiúrtha óige as an deis leis an taighde seo a chomhlíonadh ar a son. B'iontach an taithí a fuair mé as an phíosa oibre seo agus bhain mé sult agus tairbhe as. Ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil le 'The Big Lottery' chomh maith ar mhaithe leis an fhoinsé maoinithe atá curtha ar fáil acu leis na seirbhísí óige a fheabhsú agus a fhorbairt. Ina theannta sin, ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil leis na rannpháirtithe ar fad as bheith toilteanach bheith páirteach sa taighde seo.

Intreoir

Sa tuairisc taighde seo, sainaitheofar, déanfar iniúchadh agus déanfar luacháil ar na bearnaí atá ann maidir le háiseanna agus le hacmhainní sa tsoláthar don obair óige Ghaeilge i mBéal Feirste ón Fhómhair 2020. Sa taighde seo, pléifear an tábhacht atá leis an obair óige i saol daoine óga agus díreofar go háirithe orthu siúd a fhreastalaíonn ar Ghaelscoileanna agus orthu siúd a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise foghlama, mhothúchána agus shóisialta acu. Baineadh úsáid as cur chuige rannpháirtíoch, treoircheistneoir agus pléghrúpa leis na sonraí taighde a bhailiú. Tháinig na ceisteanna taighde a úsáideadh sna seisiúin sin as suirbhé a chruthaigh grúpa stiúrtha a bhfuil daoine óga ina bhun agus atá lonnaithe i nGlór na Móna. Cuirfear códú téamach ar an taighde leis na bearnaí sa tsoláthar ó rannpháirtithe éagsúla a léiriú mar atá tuismitheoirí, úsáideoirí seirbhíse, ceannairí seirbhíse agus páirtithe eile leasmhara. Tá bunús an taighde seo mar thoradh ar an phléigh agus na ceisteanna a rinne an grúpa stiúrtha a bhfuil daoine óga ina bhun i nGlór na Móna agus a d'iarr an taighde seo. Thacaigh an tuairisce taighde seo le hiarratas maoinithe le National Lottery's 'Big Lottery Fund' a rinne Glór na Móna i nDeireadh Fómhair 2020 lena seirbhísí agus le heispéireas na n-úsáideoirí seirbhíse a fhorbairt. Déanfar plé gairid anois ar stair earnáil an ghaeloideachais agus ar stair na seirbhísí san obair óige Ghaeilge.





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n
A curved display featuring colorful toys and a photo of a child playing.

An Gaeloideachas agus Na Seirbhísí san Obair Óige Ghaeilge: An Stair

Is earnáil ar leith agus measartha nua é an gaeloideachas sna sé chontae ar bhunaigh gníomhaithe Gaeilge i nGaeltacht uirbeach in iarthar Bhéal Feirste sna 60í é (Ó Baoill, 2007). Bhunaigh na teaghlaigh sin scoil sa bhliain 1971 gan ach naonúr daltaí acu, gan trácht ar chur i gcoinne ón rialtas le linn tréimhse chorrathach agus corraíl shibhialta i mBéal Feirste. Cé gur earnáil measartha nua atá ann, tá fás suntasach tagtha agus éileamh nach beag ann don ghaeloideachas le 50 bliain anuas (McKendry, 2007) agus naíscoileanna, bunscoileanna agus meánscoileanna á mbunú i ngach cuid de na sé chontae. Léiríonn na staitisticí go bhfuil chóir a bheith 7,000 páiste ag fáil oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge sna sé chontae agus thuiriscigh Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta go bhfuil méadú 41% ar líon na bpáistí a chuaigh isteach sa chóras le deich mbliain anuas.

Tá cur chuige tumoideachais ag na gaelscoileanna, córas a chuidíonn le páistí líofacht a bhaint amach go nádúrtha i dtimpeallacht iomlán lán-Ghaeilge. Tá an iliomad buntáistí dátheangacha leis an tumoideachas mar a léiríonn Cummins (1998, p.3) 'tá tuiscint níos fearr ag páistí dátheangacha ar chiall na teanga agus d'fhéadfadh siad a bheith níos solúbtha ina gcuid smaointeoireachta ná páistí aonteangacha. Is í an aidhm atá ag an chóras tumoideachais agus sealbhú teanga ná tacú le scileanna cumarsáide agus idirphearsanta na bpáistí, tacú

lena muinín agus cothaíonn sin féiniúlacht trína bhfeasacht chultúrtha agus trína rannpháirteachas in athbheochan na teanga. Tá aidhmeanna ríthábhachtacha bainteach le teanga a theagasc ar son athbheochana/athghabhála ar nós pobal labhartha a athbhunú cé go mbíonn líon díreireach is easpa acmhainní ann mar atá maoiniú, áiseanna, traenáil agus deiseanna leis an teanga a úsáid (Fishman, 1991; McCarty, 2003). Tá sin tábhachtach mar go nglactar leis go forleathan gurb iad scoileanna tumoideachais agus seirbhísí tumtha an dóigh is fearr le scileanna teanga a thabhairt ar ais do ghlúnta óga nach bhfuil an teanga sin sa bhaile acu (Ó Baoill, 2007; Kipp, 2009; Hinton, 2011; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014). Tá suntas ar leith ag baint leis sin in earnáil an ghaeloideachais mar nach í an Ghaeilge teanga dhúchais na dtuismitheoirí/na gcaomhnóirí d'formhór na bpáistí sna scoileanna agus na páistí a úsáideann seirbhísí Gaeilge. Tá tábhacht nach beag le tumchláir fhoirmeálta agus neamhfhoirmeálta teanga don pháiste nach é T1 (teanga dhúchais) an teanga scoile acu. Tá na seirbhísí a sholáthraíonn Glór na Móna lárnach i ndaingniú na foghlama neamhfhoirmeálta agus i soláthar deiseanna forbartha do pháistí an ghaeloideachais i mBéal Feirste. Déanfar plé anois ar na seirbhísí a sholáthraíonn Glór na Móna.

An cúlra:

Seirbhísí san obair óige i nGlór na Móna

Is eagraíocht phobalbhunaithe Ghaeilge í Glór na Móna atá lonnaithe san Uachtar Chluanaí agus a sholáthraíonn seirbhísí do theaghlaigh a bhfuil Gaeilge acu, do dhaltáí scoile agus do ghrúpaí pobail sa cheantar mháguaird. Tríd an obair óige, tacaíocht don óige agus imeachtaí óige, cuireann Glór na Móna leis an rannpháirteachas i measc daoine óga in athbheochan na Gaeilge (Charity Commission NI, 2016) Sa chomhthéacs sin, ní amháin go dtacaíonn is go bhforbraíonn an obair óige forbairt phearsanta, shóisialta agus oideachasúil na ndaoine óga (Devlin and Gunning, 2009) ach tá ról lárnach aici in athbheochan na Gaeilge agus in athnuachan pobal atá faoi mhíbhuntáiste, go háirithe i dtaca le bunú earnáil an ghaeloideachais, mar a phléifear níos moille. Tá Glór na Móna chun tosaigh san obair sin i mBéal Feirste agus tá soláthar san obair óige acu sna ceantair seo a leanas; Uachtar Cluanaí, Bóthar na bhFál, Léana an Dúin agus tuaisceart Bhéal Feirste. Is éard atá i gceist leis an obair sin ná cumainn óige áitiúla, cláir óige agus cláir oiliúna do gach oibrí le cinntiú gur féidir cláir cheannródaíocha nuálacha a sholáthar fríd an obair óige.

Le trí bliana anuas, tá fás as cuimse tagtha ar na cláir i nGlór na Móna agus anois soláthraítear réimse níos leithne de chláir, tá méadú ar an bhuiséad agus ar bhainistiú an bhuiséid, tá níos mó úsáideoirí seirbhíse ann agus níos mó daoine fostaithe acu. Léirítear an fás sin sna staitisticí a bhaineann le húsáideoirí seirbhíse ó 2015; ag an tús, bhí ceithre chumann óige páirtaimseartha ag Glór na Móna ag feidhmiú ar feadh cheithre

huaire an chloig agus anois tá cúig chlár déag ar fud Bhéal Feirste (Glór na Móna, 2020). Méadófar an t-éileamh do sheirbhísí san obair óige Ghaeilge amach anseo de réir mar a mhéadaíonn líon na bpáistí sna gaelscoileanna. Dá réir sin, tá géarghá le dul i ngleic leis an mhaoiniú, traenáil, cóiríocht, acmhainní agus áiseanna a thugtar don earnáil le teacht leis an mhéadú sin. In ainneoin an fháis is an éilimh ar an ghaeloideachas agus ar an obair óige Ghaeilge sna sé chontae, níor tugadh cothrom na Féinne don earnáil maidir le tacaíocht ná maoiniú de, go háirithe ó Roinn an Oideachais, i gcomparáid le mionteangacha eile in Éirinn agus sa RA. Tugadh aitheantas oifigiúil don Ghaeilge sna sé chontae den chéad uair nuair a síníodh Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta i 1998.

Tugadh aitheantas don ghaeloideachas sa chomhaontú agus iarradh

'ar na rannpháirtithe ar fad an tábhacht a bhain le meas, tuigbheáil agus caoinfhulaingt a aithint i dtaca le héagsúlacht teangacha mar atá An Ghaeilge, Ultais agus teangacha na bpobal éagsúil eitheach sna sé chontae...'¹

1. The Belfast Agreement, 1998. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-belfast-agreement> (18/10/2020).

Luaitear in Education (NI) Order 1998²:

“ *Dualgas Roinn an Oideachais a bheas ann forbairt an ghaeloideachais a chothú is a spreagadh.* ”

Ní amháin gur léir an easpa tacaíochta reachtúla i dtaca le foghlaim na teanga de ach tá easpa gnímh ann gaeloideachas agus seirbhísí Gaeilge a sholáthar do pháistí a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu. Is ó phobal an lucht oibre a tháinig mórchuid na ngaelscoileanna sna sé chontae agus iad lonnaithe i gceantair chaitliceacha ina bhfuil leibhéil arda de dhíothacht ilchineálach. Léirítear sin sa taighde a rinne Valadez-Martinez and Hirsch (2018) a deir go bhfuil na leibhéil is airde de bhochtaineacht leanaí sna sé chontae i dtoghcheantar an Fheabhail agus in iarthar agus i dtuaisceart Bhéal Feirste agus go bhfuil an méid is mó cainteoirí Gaeilge sna ceantair sin (agus An tIúr agus Múrna) (Mercator Education, 2004). Ar a bharr sin, léiríonn an taighde go mbíonn méadú ar na riachtanais bhreise shóisialta, iompair, mhothúchána agus oideachais ag páistí agus daoine fásta atá mar chuid de ghrúpa nó atá ina gcónaí i gceantar a bhfuil leibhéal níos airde de dhíothacht ann (Menzies et. al, 2016; Reay, 2014). Tá Glór na Móna lonnaithe i gceantar atá sa bharr chúig cheantar de **'Multiple Deprivation Measure Rank'** (NISRA, 2010), agus d'aithin siad go bhfuil méadú ar an éileamh don tsoláthar san obair óige neamhfhoirmeálta do pháistí a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise foghlama acu.

2. Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1998/1759/contents>.



Is as sin a bunáíodh an tseirbhís 'Sólás na nÓg', seirbhís san obair óige do dhá aoisghrúpa a thiteann amach oíche amháin sa tseachtain agus a thugann deis do pháistí a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise sóisialta, mhothúchána agus iompair acu rochtain a fháil ar sheirbhísí óige, oideachas neamhfhoirmeálta agus iad trí mheán na Gaeilge. Tá an tseirbhís sin ag dul ar aghaidh ó 2019 agus tá géarghá le níos mó tacaíochta, traenála agus maoinithe a chur ina treo. Bhíothas ag brath ar fhoinsí éagsúla maoinithe a bhí éiginnte neamhbhuan agus cé go raibh siad ríthábhachtach i mbunú agus dul chun cinn na seirbhíse, níor leor iad leis na hacmhainní cearta, an traenáil cheart ná an t-ionchur ceart a chur ar fáil leis an tseirbhís a thabhairt chun blátha. Déanfar iniúchadh anois ar an tsoláthar agus an tacaíocht a thugtar do Riachtanais Speisialta Oideachais sa ghaeloideachas.

Riachtanais Speisialta Oideachais sa ghaeloideachas

De réir **'Survey of Provision for Special Educational Needs in Irish-Medium Primary Schools'** (1999), tuairisc a rinne Roinn an Oideachais agus ETI,

“*'ní mór do ghaelscoileanna i gcoitinne comhthuiscint shoiléir agus cur chuige aontaithe a bheith acu maidir le polasaithe RSO agus le nósanna agus cleachtas, i dtaca leis na riachtanais atá ar pháistí atá ag foghlaim dhá theanga.'* (1.3)



Lena chois sin, léiríonn taighde a rinne Pobal (2010, l.1), gur léirigh

'múinteoirí, tuismitheoirí agus seirbhísí gairmiúla tacaíochta go bhfuil gá le heolas agus le treoir maidir le RSO agus an dátheangachas, RSO agus an tumoideachas agus soláthar ceart do RSO (measúnuithe, tacaíocht, áiseanna), go háirithe agus an Ghaeilge mar theanga dhúchais an pháiste.'

Tugtar dúshlán don tsoláthar sin i Special Educational Needs of Bilingual (Irish-English) Children paper (DE agus Pobal, 2009) alt a léiríonn buntáistí an oideachais dhátheangaigh, go háirithe do pháistí a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais acu ach lena chois sin, a léiríonn taighde idirnáisiúnta

'mhol gairmithe do thuismitheoirí a bpáistí a thógáil san aon teanga' (p.32).

Tá sé deacair a shéanadh, mar sin de, go bhfuil easpa soláthair agus easpa taithí le riachtanais speisialta oideachais in earnáil an ghaeloideachais i gcomparáid le hearnáil an Bhéarla. Is iad na fáthanna leis sin chomh hóg is atá an earnáil, easpa taighde, easpa áiseanna agus easpa traenáil shaincheaptha, easpa tacaíochta ó na páirtithe leasmhara oideachais. Léiríonn an taighde na bearnaí atá sa tsoláthar atá ann go fóill 20 bliain ón iniúchadh earnála a rinne ETI agus ó na moltaí a rinneadh ar nós ***'ionad barr feabhais'*** agus ***'líonra tacaíochta/áiseanna do mhúinteoirí agus oibríthe'*** (Ní Chinnéide, 2009, sct. 4.2), forbairt ar thraenáil shaincheaptha gaeloideachais agus riachtanais speisialta oideachais agus taighde níos cuimsithí ar leibhéal náisiúnta.

Go minic, braitheann an soláthar ceart do riachtanais speisialta go mór ar bhuiséid agus bíonn deacracht ar leith in earnáil na Gaeilge mar go mbíonn níos lú páistí ann, de ghnáth. Bíonn tionchar ag an pholaitíocht agus dearcthaí i dtreo na Gaeilge ar an tacaíocht a thugtar don earnáil fosta. Aontaíonn Ó Baoill (2008, p.423) go bhfuil easpa treorach agus pleanála don todhchaí nuair a deir sé go bhfuil **'easpa taighde ar na gnéithe oideolaíocha, oideachais, teangeolaíocha agus sochtheangeolaíocha a bhaineann leis an tumoideachas'** san oideachas fhoirmeálta agus neamhfhoirmeálta agus go bhfuil pleanáil straitéiseach don todhchaí in easnamh chomh maith. Áiteoidh mé anois an tábhacht a bhaineann le seirbhísí óige i saol daoine óga.



An tábhacht a bhaineann le seirbhísí óige i saol daoine óga

Tá an iliomad buntáistí a bhaineann le seirbhísí óige a thacaíonn le forbairt shóisialta, mhothúchánach agus phearsanta an duine óig, is cuma cén teanga a úsáidtear leis an tseirbhís a chur ar fáil. Cuirtear síos ar an obair óige mar:

I measc na mbuntáistí a bhaineann le bheith páirteach agus

“*próiseas soiléir oideachais i dtimpeallacht neamhfhoirmeálta. Déantar iarracht daoine óga a fhorbairt, taithí a thabhairt dóibh, rannpháirteachas a chur chun cinn agus feasacht shóisialta a spreagadh, go háirithe lena spreagadh le bheith criticiúil agus cruthaitheach mar fhreagairt ar a dtaithí agus ar an domhan thart orthu*

(National Occupational Standards, cited in Youth Work NI, 2014, lch.4)

a bheith ag baint úsáide as seirbhísí óige, déantar iniúchadh ar luachanna agus ar thuairimí an duine, déantar forbairt ar agus nochtar guth agus féiniúlacht na ndaoine óga sa tsochaí agus tacaítear le daoine óga scileanna agus cumais éagsúla a fhoghlaim le cuidiú leo barr a gcumais a bhaint amach (National Youth Agency, 2020).

Chomh maith leis na buntáistí thuasluaite, os rud é go bhfeidhmíonn seirbhísí óige Ghlór na Móna trí mheán na Gaeilge, bíonn feasacht chultúrtha agus féiniúlacht níos doimhne ag na daoine óga a úsáideann na seirbhísí. Ní mór a lua gur chuidigh seirbhísí Ghlór na Móna le hiarúsáideoirí seirbhíse a scileanna a úsáid i rólanna tacaíochta i bpobal na Gaeilge i mBéal Feirste:

“*Ceaptar aosaigh óga agus déagóirí as earnáil an ghaeloideachais i róil cheannaireachta i bpobal na Gaeilge, go háirithe san earnáil óige*

(Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta, 2018).

Leis an bhogadh i dtreo daoine óga a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise oideachais agus iompair acu a thabhairt isteach chuig na seirbhísí i nGlór na Móna, tugtar dóchas dóibh siúd a fhágtar amach agus atá imeallaithe mar gheall ar a riachtanais bhreise le go dtig leo scileanna a fhorbairt, a dtuairimí a nochtadh, róil cheannaireachta a ghlacadh agus a nguth féin a aimsiú sa tsochaí.

Déanfar iniúchadh anois ar an reachtaíocht a bhaineann le cearta an pháiste, guth agus rannpháirteachas na ndaoine a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta acu i dtaca le hobair óige agus rochtain ar sheirbhísí.



Ag sainathint na bearna:

Cur chuige bunaithe ar chearta an pháiste

Is ráiteas é an Coinbhinsiún um Chearta an Linbh (CRC) a chinntíonn ‘Cosaint, Soláthar agus Rannpháirteachas’ do pháistí, mar a dúirt Verhellen (2000, lch.49). Is é an coinbhinsiún Cearta Daonna is aitheanta ar domhan é agus cuimsíonn sé an reachtaíocht is mó a bhaineann le hoideachas (Lundy 2012). In Alt 2 den CRC a luaitear páistí a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta acu den chéad uair i script Cearta Daonna agus tá Alt 23 go hiomlán dírithe ar pháistí atá faoi mhíchumas. Deirtear go gcaithfidh an Stát is Páirithe a chinntiú

“go mbeidh saol fiúntach iomlán ag na páistí sin, go mbeidh dínit acu, go tacófar leo bheith neamhspleách agus a bheith gníomhach sa phobal.”

Tá sé ráite go soiléir ag coiste an CRC, áfach, go bhfuil páistí a bhfuil Riachtanais Speisialta acu i dteideal do na cearta ar fad agus don chosaint iomlán a bhaineann leis an choinbhinsiún agus chan amháin an chosaint a bhaineann le hAlt 23. Is coinbhinsiún ar leith é an CRC mar gur spreag sé feachtas maidir **‘le páistí mar shealbhóirí cirt agus dínit páistí a chaomhnú i dtaca le cearta daonna, cearta sóisialta agus cearta polaitiúla’** (Harcourt et al, 2013, lch.287).

Cé go bhfuil an CRC forásach, ní hionann sin agus é gan locht. Is **‘íoschaighdeáin chuimsitheacha’** iad an CRC a aontaíodh ar fud an domhain (Goldson et. al, 2006, p.96).

B’fhéidir gurb é an gné is teoranta den CRC i dtaca le soláthar abhchóideachta do pháistí atá faoi mhíchumas de an dóigh a n-úsáidtear téarmaíocht leighis in Alt 23 (2) agus (3): **‘sainchúram’** agus **‘cóir leighis’**, a mhaíonn go bhfuil gá le hathshlánú nó leigheas ar a **‘mbail’**. Ar a bharr sin, tá soláthar na gceart sin **‘ag brath orthu bheith ar fáil’** agus ar **‘na hacmhainní’** bheith ar fáil le riar ar an tsoláthar sin. Sin an fáth a sílítear go n-athdhearbhaíonn an Coinbhinsiún ar Chearta Daoine atá faoi Mhíchumas (CRPD) agus go dtéann sé níos faide ná na hait i CRC, go háirithe i dtaca le páistí a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu.

Glacadh leis an CRPD in 2006 agus ba é an chéad chonradh a bhain le Cearta Daonna san 21ú aois. Tugann an CRPD ról gníomhach i scríobh an doiciméid dóibh siúd a mbaineann an coinbhinsiún leo agus tugann sin deis do dhaoine atá faoi mhíchumas (a fágadh amach as reachtaíocht cearta daonna roimhe sin) ionchur ceart agus tuigbheáil a bheith acu ar an choinbhinsiún. (Bruce, 2014). Baineadh úsáid as cur chuige rannpháirtíoch sa taighde seo mar a mhol an grúpa stiúrtha a bhfuil daoine óga ina bhun agus chinntigh sin gur tugadh guth do dhaoine óga a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu agus go bhfuil siad le sonrú sna tras-scríbhinní. Is féidir comparáid a dhéanamh

idir an CRC agus an CRPD ach tá suntas ar leith ag baint leis an CRPD i gcomparáid le teanga chineálach atá in úsáid i CRC maidir le soláthar. Moltar i CRPD gur chóir saoirsí bunúsacha agus dínit na ndaoine atá faoi mhíchumas a chaomhnú trí chuidiú **'aioisoiriúnach'** agus soláthar le go mbainfidh an duine a chearta amach.

Luann Bruce (2014, lch.18) **'comhdheis saoil'**, slí mhaireachtála 'nach féidir a íosghrádú chuig leibhéal áirithe intinne ná coirp'. Is cuid bhunúsach sin d'aidhmeanna an CRPD, go háirithe mar a luaitear in Alt 3 faoi Phrionsabail Ghinearálta gur chóir don Stát is Páirtithe meas a bheith acu ar **'chumas páistí forbairt a dhéanamh'**. De ghnáth, cuirtear bac roimh dhaoine atá faoi mhíchumas, go háirithe páistí, forbairt a dhéanamh agus cinntí a dhéanamh iad féin agus éagóir is leithcheal a bhíonn mar thoradh air sin. Deirtear i CRPD gur chóir an deis chéanna a thabhairt do dhaoine forbairt agus bláthú ar a ndóigh féin agus a fhaigheann daoine néarthipiciúla, agus is féidir le seirbhísí óige tacú leo sin a bhaint amach. Mar fhocal scoir, i dtaca le hAlt 30 **'Saol Cultúrtha'**, deirtear i CRPD

“go mbeidh daoine atá faoi mhíchumas i dteideal d'aitheantas agus tacaíocht i dtaca lena bhféiniúlacht chultúrtha agus theangeolaíoch, teanga chomharthaíochta agus cultúr na mbodhar.”



Tá sin ríthábhachtach don taighde seo maidir le rochtain agus soláthar seirbhísí óige trí mheán na Gaeilge do pháistí a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu agus léiríonn sé arís tábhacht na hoibre a dhéanann Glór na Móna. Tá na seirbhísí óige in earnáil na Gaeilge ríthábhachtach i soláthar seirbhísí agus deiseanna atá cuimsitheach agus a thacaíonn le cultúr na ndaoine óga atá in earnáil an ghaeiloideachais.

Tabharfaidh mé réasúnú ar an mhodheolaíocht a mhol an grúpa stiúrtha a bhfuil daoine óga ina bhun ar an dearadh taighde a úsáideadh sa taighde seo.

Modheolaíocht

Taighde rannpháirteach

Mar atá luaite san iniúchadh ar an taighde a bhaineann leis an ghaeloideachas agus leis an tsoláthar don obair óige Ghaeilge i mBéal Feirste, ba mhaith liom na bearnaí agus na laigí atá sa tsoláthar sin a léiriú. Is le haird ar an easpa tacaíochta agus maoinithe a dhírigh an grúpa stiúrtha a bhfuil daoine óga ina bhun ar na ceisteanna taighde seo a leanas agus pléifear sa taighde seo iad:

1. Cad é an tionchar a bhí ag na seirbhísí agus na tionscadail a chuir Glór na Móna ar fáil ar pháistí in earnáil na Gaeilge?

2. Ar tugadh athruithe faoi deara maidir le hiompar fisiceach, sóisialta agus mothúchánach nó le cumas cumarsáide na n-úsáideoirí seirbhíse ó ghlac siad páirt i seirbhísí Glór na Móna?

3. Cad iad na seirbhísí eile atá ar fáil d'úsáideoirí seirbhíse sa cheantar mháguaird, má tá seirbhísí eile ann? An mbeidh úsáideoirí seirbhíse toilteanach freastal orthu?

4. Cad iad na háiseanna, na hacmhainní nó na seirbhísí eile a ba mhaith le húsáideoirí seirbhíse agus caomhnóirí a fheiceáil i nGlór na Móna sna ceithre bliana amach romhainn?

Cumadh na ceisteanna sin mar fhreagra ar na ceisteanna atá ar an fhoirm iarratais BLF agus tá siad bunaithe fosta ar shuirbhé a rinne an grúpa stiúrtha a bhfuil daoine óga ina bhun roimhe seo faoin tsoláthar seirbhísí sa chumann óige i nGlór na Móna. Glacfaidh an fócasghrúpa treoir ó na ceisteanna taighde agus ón treoircheistneoir a mhúnlóidh an próiseas bhailithe sonraí den tuairisc seo. Molann Cohen et.al (2011) go bhfuil 'oiriúnacht don fheidhm' rithábachtach nuair atáthar ag roghnú modh ar leith taighde le sonraí a bhailiú agus a chur le chéile d'ábhar ar leith atá ag teacht le ceisteanna taighde a bhaineann leis an ábhar.

Tá cur chuige rannpháirtíoch leis an taighde seo le guth a thabhairt do dhaoine óga, a dtuismitheoirí, agus do pháirtithe eile leasmhara a úsáideann agus a bhfuil baint acu leis an seirbhísí i nGlór na Móna.

Is cur chuige taighde atá córasach, straitéiseach agus comhoibrítheach é taighde gníomháíochta rannpháirtíochta (PAR) ina ndéanann na daoine a bhíonn thíos le saincheist ar leith iniúchadh ar an tsaincheist sin (Baum, MacDougal & Smith, 2006). Cuidíonn PAR le grúpaí atá imeallaithe a chumasú, spreagann sé gníomh agus tugann sé guth dóibh siúd a ndéantar leithcheal orthu (Baum, MacDougal & Smith, 2006). Os rud é gur bunáíodh gaelscoileanna i gceantair atá faoi mhíbhuntáiste socheacnamaíoch agus mar gheall ar dhearcthaí diúltacha i dtreo na Gaeilge san earnáil oideachais agus i sochaí na sé chontae i gcoitinne, tá ionchur na nguthanna imeallaithe rithábachtach leis an éagothroime san earnáil maidir le soláthar seirbhísí óige a léiriú.

Sampla taighde

Sa tsampla taighde bhí úsáideoirí seirbhíse, a gcaomhnóirí, páirtithe leasmhara oideachais agus obair óige agus baill eile de phobal na Gaeilge. Rinneadh ceithre phlé le fócasghrúpaí i Meán Fómhair 2020 nuair a iarradh ar pháistí agus a dtuismitheoirí bheith ann, agus cloíodh le treoirlínte maidir le Covid-19. Tugadh cuireadh do na tuismitheoirí agus na páistí, tháinig siad ar bhonn deonach agus míníodh dóibh nach mbeadh iarmhairt ar bith ann dá ndiúltódh siad a bheith páirteach. Rinne na rannpháirtithe a bhí toilteanach bheith páirteach teagmháil le foireann nGlór na Móna le dearbhú go mbeadh siad i láthair. Rinneadh dhá fhócasghrúpa leis na grúpaí óige, grúpa amháin do pháistí bunscoile (seachtar) agus grúpa eile do pháistí meánscoile (ochtár) agus rinneadh dhá ghrúpa leis na tuismitheoirí (seachtar sa chéad ghrúpa agus seachtar sa dara grúpa).

Cuireadh agallamh fosta ar bhaill an ghrúpa stiúrtha i nGlór na Móna a bhfuil daoine óga ina bhun agus a bhí lárnach i bpleanáil agus dearadh an tionscadail agus cuireadh agallamh ar ionadaithe as Fóram Óige na sé chontae. Tá tras-scríbhinní na n-agallamh ar fad ar fáil i Aguisín A. Cé go ndearnadh iarracht teagmháil a dhéanamh le daoine eile in earnáil na Gaeilge agus le páirtithe leasmhara oideachais le páirt a ghlacadh sa phróiseas bhailithe sonraí seo, thit an taighde seo amach le linn pháindéim dhomhanda Covid-19, rud a chruthaigh saincheistanna sábháilteachta agus bacainní maidir leis an bhailiú sonraí. Cloíodh leis na treoirlínte maidir le Covid-19 do na sonraí ar fad a bailíodh go pearsanta leis na rannpháirtithe ar fad a chosaint.



Plé

Cuirfear síos ar na rannpháirtithe agus na grúpaí éagsúla a ghlac páirt sa taighde seo agus déanfar iniúchadh ar a n-ionchur nuair a cuireadh na ceisteanna taighde orthu sna seisiúin bhailithe sonraí. Roinnfear na sonraí ina dhá chuid; sonraí na ndaoine óga agus sonraí na dtuismitheoirí.

Fócasghrúpa 1 (Sóisir)

Bhí seachtar rannpháirtithe san fhócasghrúpa seo as bunscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge (cúigear buachaillí agus beirt chailíní). Bhí riachtanais bhreise oideachais, mhothúchána agus iompair ag cuid de na rannpháirtithe sa ghrúpa seo mar atá NSU, NHEA agus siondróm Aspergers. Cuireadh fáilte rompu agus gabhadh buíochas leo as a bheith páirteach agus míníodh leagan amach an phlé. Cuireadh i gcuimhne do gach páiste go raibh siad páirteach ar bhonn deonach agus go dtiocfadh leo imeacht am ar bith gan iarmhairtí diúltacha. Cuireadh i gcuimhne dóibh fosta go ndéanfaí taifeadadh gutha ar mhaithe le tras-scríbhinní agus go bhfaighfí réidh leis nuair a chríochnófaí an tuairisc taighde.

I dtús an phlé, roinn na rannpháirtithe a n-eispéireas ar na seirbhísí i nGlór na Móna agus na fáthanna a raibh siad ag iarraidh a bheith páirteach sa chumann óige. Tugadh réimse fáthanna, mar a bhí, ag iarraidh a bheith sóisialta is bualadh le cairde úra, a bheith ag imirt cluichí agus ag amharc ar 'YouTube

ar an teilifís mhór', ag baint úsáid as an tseomra céadfach agus áiseanna a chur an tseirbhís ar fáil, deiseanna dul ar turais agus dul chun na pictiúrlainne. Dúirt páiste amháin gur thug a mháthair air dul chuig an chumann óige mar nach raibh mórán cairde aige ar scoil agus d'aontaigh páiste eile leis an ráiteas. Bhog an plé ar aghaidh chuig na seirbhísí eile a bhí ar fáil do na rannpháirtithe sa cheantar agus chuig an tábhacht a bhain leo a bheith páirteach i nGlór na Móna. Níor dhúirt ach buachaill amháin gur bhain sé úsáid as seirbhísí eile ina cheantar, seirbhís a soláthraíodh trí Bhéarla. Nuair a cuireadh ceist ar na rannpháirtithe eile faoin fháth a raibh dúil acu dul chuig an chumann óige, thug siad freagraí dearfacha. Dúirt siad gur maith leo rudaí úra a fhoghlaim, go mbíonn siad in ann an seomra céadfach a úsáid agus cuidíonn sin leo a bheith socair agus compordach, phléigh siad go mothaíonn siad mar chuid de rud agus go bhfuil úinéireacht acu ar an oíche a mbaineann siad úsáid as na seirbhísí óige, oíche atá ar fáil do pháistí a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu agus luaigh siad fosta go mbíonn siad ar bís dul go Glór na Móna lena gcairde a fheiceáil agus le bualadh le daoine úra.

Agus iad ag labhairt faoi na forbairtí a ba mhaith leo leis na seirbhísí i nGlór na Móna a fheabhsú sna ceithre bliana amach romhainn, labhair siad faoi áiseanna úra amhail iPad le cluichí a imirt agus le hamharc ar YouTube, níos mó málaí suí agus bogfheisteachas tí le húsáid agus iad ag imirt cluichí. Labhair siad go minic faoi spás taobh amuigh le go mbeidh níos mó daoine ábalta freastal ar an chumann óige agus luadh páirc 3G le spórt agus cluichí a imirt. Mhol páiste amháin níos mó turas agus mhol

sé an t-uisceadán mar shampla. Mhol rannpháirtí eile gur chóir cur leis an ghné céadfach den tseirbhís, agus áit a bheith an do na húsáideoirí seirbhíse néal codlata a fháil agus tuirse orthu, go háirithe agus iad ag dul chuig an chumann i ndiaidh na scoile agus iad tuirseach ó challán an chumainn óige.

Fócasghrúpa 2 (Sinsir)

Bhí ochtar rannpháirtithe sa dara grúpa (beirt chailíní, seisear buachaillí) ón ghrúpa meánscoile a úsáideann na seirbhísí i nGlór na Móna. Bhí an grúpa iontach dearfach agus mar gheall ar a n-aibíocht agus a gcumas cumarsáide, bhí siad in ann léargas maith a thabhairt agus iad ábalta a mbarúlacha agus a moltaí a leathnú nuair a iarradh orthu.

Bhí réimse de riachtanais oideachasúla, mhothúchánacha agus iompair ag na rannpháirtithe sa ghrúpa, mar atá, NSU, NHEA agus Siondróm Asperger. Cuireadh fáilte rompu agus gabhadh buíochas leo as a bheith páirteach agus míníodh leagan amach an phlé. Cuireadh i gcuimhne do gach páiste go raibh siad páirteach ar bhonn deonach agus go dtiocfadh leo imeacht am ar bith gan iarmhairtí diúltacha. Cuireadh i gcuimhne dóibh fosta go ndéanfaí taifeadadh gutha ar mhaithe le tras-scríbhinní agus go bhfaighfí réidh leis nuair a chríochnófaí an tuairisc taighde.

Thosaigh muid trí phlé a dhéanamh ar na seirbhísí óige i nGlór na Móna. Bhí na rannpháirtithe iontach dearfach agus léirigh siad na buntáistí go bhfuil a leithéid de sheirbhís ann do pháistí a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu, go háirithe trí mheán na Gaeilge:

'Seo an t-aon chumann den chineál seo a riarann ar dhaoine a bhfuil deacrachtaí foghlama acu agus, ar ndóigh, is é an t-aon chumann a dhéanann sin trí mheán na Gaeilge.'

Labhair na rannpháirtithe faoin dóigh a gcuidíonn na seirbhísí óige leo scileanna a fhoghlaim:

'D'fhoghlaim muid go leor scileanna forbartha, go háirithe mar go mbíonn cuidiú de dhíth ar dhaoine cosúil linne leis na scileanna sin amhail scileanna sóisialta agus cumarsáide.'

Luaigh roinnt mhaith de na rannpháirtithe na háiseanna atá ar fáil, mar atá, ag imirt peile, spás a bheith acu bualadh le cairde úra, cluichí Playstation a imirt agus úsáid a bhaint as an tseomra céadfach. Chuir siad an seomra céadfach agus an cumann óige i gcomparáid leis na spásanna atá acu sa bhaile agus ar scoil agus dúradh go mothaíonn siad níos lú brú teacht chuig an chumann óige mar nach gá dóibh obair scoile a dhéanamh:

'Tá áit mar seo againn ar scoil ach déanann muid obair ar scoil ach anseo forbraíonn muid ár scileanna sóisialta'... 'Bíonn neart spraoi agam anseo, tá sé difriúil ón scoil mar nach ndéanann muid obair.'

Dúirt rannpháirtí eile gur áit speisialta í an seomra céadfach agus mhínigh sé na buntáistí a bhaineann leis:

'Tá sé dorcha agus mothaím ar mo shuaimhneas ann. Tá soilse difriúla agus dathanna sa tseomra agus tá sé iontach

suaimhneach ann.'

D'aontaigh rannpháirtí eile leis sin agus é ag déanamh comparáid idir an seomra céadfach agus a thaithí sa bhaile:

'Níl aon áit cosúil leis an tseomra céadfach againn sa bhaile. Is é mo sheomra leapa an rud is cóngaraí. Sin an fáth a bhfuil dúil agam teacht anseo, mar gheall ar an spás'.

Lena chois sin, mhínigh na rannpháirtithe na buntáistí sóisialta leis an chumann óige. Dúirt duine amháin go mothaíonn sé go labhraíonn sé leis na daoine céanna ar scoil agus sa bhaile agus go bhfuil sé sásta bualadh le daoine úra. Thacaigh rannpháirtí eile leis:

'Mothaím go n-éalaím ó mo theaghlach ar feadh tamaill nuair a thagaim chuig an chumann.'

D'aontaigh na rannpháirtithe ar fad gur chóir spás sóisialta a bheith acu taobh amuigh den teach, áit a dtiocfadh leo bualadh le daoine úra agus labhairt lena bpiaraí.

Nuair a labhair siad faoi na háiseanna eile óige ina gceantair áitiúla, bhí an chuma ar an scéal go raibh níos mó roghanna ag na baill níos sine maidir le cumainn óige eile agus seirbhísí i gcomparáid leis na baill níos óige. Léirigh roinnt mhaith de na rannpháirtithe go raibh difear sna cumainn óige eile, go háirithe i dtaca leis an teanga de:

'Níl sé cosúil le Glór na Móna. Is maith liom teacht anseo le mo chuid Gaeilge a úsáid mar gurb í mo theanga dhúchais í...Is maith linn teacht anseo mar go labhraíonn muid i

nGaeilge agus tuigeann daoine muid.'

Ní dhearna ach rannpháirtí amháin tagairt do chumann eile agus rang bodhráin a bhí ann a theagastar trí mheán na Gaeilge. Dúirt cuid de na rannpháirtithe, áfach, nach dtéann siad chuig imeacht ná chuig cumainn eile taobh amuigh de Ghlór na Móna. Dúirt duine amháin go mbíonn sé ag streachailt cairde a dhéanamh ar scoil agus nár mhaith leis dul amach taobh amuigh den scoil. Dúirt sé go raibh dúil aige sna seirbhísí i nGlór na Móna mar go raibh líon níos lú daoine a fhreastalaíonn ar an chumann agus go raibh sé in ann cairde a dhéanamh agus a bheith sóisialta ann.

Mhaígh duine eile gur mhothaigh sé gur cairde iad an fhoireann i nGlór na Móna agus go bhfuil meas ag an fhoireann orthu. Bhog an plé ar aghaidh chuig na moltaí a bhí acu leis na seirbhísí i nGlór na Móna a fheabhsú sna ceithre bliana atá romhainn. Luaigh rannpháirtí amháin gur mhaith leis

'fáil réidh le Covid sa dóigh is nach ndruidfidh an cumann arís.'

Tugadh go leor moltaí maidir leis na háiseanna agus an hacmhainní amhail níos mó consól cluichí agus forbairt ar an spás taobh istigh agus taobh amuigh, páirc peile san áireamh. Dúirt duine eile gur mhaith leis go dtiocfadh níos mó ball chuig an chumann le go dtiocfadh leo níos mó cairde a dhéanamh. Luaigh cúpla duine gur mhaith leo níos mó turas a bheith ann fosta. Dúirt duine eile go mbaineann sé sult as teacht chuig an chumann óige mar go mbíonn cead aige dul a luí dhá uair an chloig níos moille ar oíche scoile.

Rinneadh moladh ar leith go bhféadfaí forbairt a dhéanamh ar an phlé agus traenáil maidir le slite beatha agus deiseanna do na baill, go háirithe do na baill sin atá ag déanamh roghanna do na TGManna agus Ardleibhéal:

'B'fhéidir go mbeadh sé maith labhairt faoi na roghanna agus cuidiú a fháil na roghanna cearta a dhéanamh do TGM agus a leithéidí,'

Dúirt duine amháin go mbeadh suim aige scileanna cócaireachta a fhoghlaim agus go mbeadh cúrsaí nó oiliúint ina chuidiú.

Fócasghrúpa 3 (An Grúpa stiúrtha a bhfuil daoine óga ina bhun)

Bhí beirt bhall den ghrúpa stiúrtha a bhfuil daoine ina bhun páirteach sa phlé seo. Bhí ról lárnach ag an ghrúpa i ndearadh na tuairisce seo agus na gceisteanna taighde. Mhóthaigh siad go raibh sé tábhachtach smaoineamh ar a n-eispéireas féin mar chuid de phobal Ghlór na Móna agus ar an dóigh ar chuidigh sin leo forbairt phearsanta agus phroifisiúnta a dhéanamh.

Nuair a cuireadh ceist ar an bheirt bhall faoin dóigh a ndeachaigh na seirbhísí i nGlór na Móna i bhfeidhm ar a bhforbairt, labhair siad go han-dearfach faoin obair atá déanta ag an chumann óige do na húsáideoirí seirbhíse. Tá an bheirt ag freastal ar an

chumann ó thosaigh siad ar an mheánscoil. Luaigh siad beirt an mhuintín atá acu mar gheall go dtéann siad chuig an chumann óige, go háirithe i dtaca le hagallaimh le haghaidh postanna agus ag dul chun na hollscoile. Mhínigh an bheirt acu an tábhacht theangeolaíoch a bhaineann leis an tseirbhís a bheith trí mheán na Gaeilge; mhóthaigh siad úinéireacht agus go raibh dáimh acu mar chuid de phobal Ghlór na Móna, rud nach bhfaightear le seirbhísí eile óige ar fud Bhéal Feirste. Bhí an iliomad deiseanna ag an bheirt obair dheonach a dhéanamh leis an chumann óige, lena n-aibíocht, a bhforbairt agus a n-iontaofacht a léiriú le foireann Ghlór na Móna, foireann a thug na deiseanna sin dóibh ag iad ag freastal ar an chumann. Os rud é gur fhás siad aníos agus iad ag freastal ar na seirbhísí, bhí barúil acu ar na bearnaí atá sa tsoláthar agus bhí siad in ann moltaí forbartha a thabhairt, go háirithe i dtaca leo siúd a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu. Leag siad béim ar thábhacht na seirbhíse agus ar na buntáistí atá ann do na páistí a bhfuil deachrachaí foghlama acu, go háirithe iad siúd ar mhian leo rochtain ar fháil ar na seirbhísí trí mheán na Gaeilge, agus mhínigh siad go bhfuil tuilleadh taighde agus maoiniú de dhíth le go mbeidh an soláthar sásúil.

Fócasghrúpa tuismitheora 1 (Sóisir)

Rinneadh fócasghrúpa le tuismitheoirí na rannpháirtithe as an fhócasghrúpa de pháistí bunscoile. Bhí seachtar ban sa ghrúpa seo. Gabhadh buíochas leo as a bheith páirteach agus cuireadh i gcuimhne dóibh go raibh siad páirteach ar bhonn deonach agus

go ndéanfaí taifeadadh gutha ar mhaithe le tras-scríbhinní agus go bhfaighfí réidh leis nuair a chríochnófaí an tuairisc taighde. Tosaíodh an plé le ceist faoin dóigh a ndeachaigh na seirbhísí i nGlór na Móna i bhfeidhm ar a bpáistí. Labhair formhór na rannpháirtithe faoin dóigh ar chuidigh na seirbhísí lena bpáistí muinín a thógáil agus cairdeas is caidrimh a thógáil lena bpiaraí mar thoradh ar an dinimic atá sna seirbhísí i nGlór na Móna atá dírithe ar riachtanais bhreise:

'Tá i bhfad níos mó muinín ag mo pháiste. Tá cairde déanta aige. Níor shíl mé go ndéanfadh sé cairde i gcás mar sin. Níl ach cara amháin ar scoil aige ach tá cuid mhór cairde anseo aige agus bíonn sé ag iarraidh teacht anseo. Ní hamhlaidh atá an scéal le himeachtaí agus clubanna eile, go háirithe i suíomh foirmeálta'

'Maidir le mo mhacsa, d'fhreastail sé ar chumann óige Gaeilge in iarthar Bhéal Feirste nach raibh dírithe ar pháistí a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta acu. Bhí sé ansin seachtain amháin, chonaic sé damhán alla agus dhiúltaigh sé dul ar ais mar go bhfuil fóibe mhillteanach air faoi dhamháin alla. Nuair a luaigh mé an áit seo leis, bhí sé ar bís...níl mórán dlúthchairde aige. Ach anseo, tá cairde aige. Is féidir leis a aithint láithreach nuair a bhíonn riachtanais speisialta ag duine eile agus rachaidh sé chucu. Is cuma más NHEA nó uathachas atá ann...is cuma cad é atá ann, i gcomparáid leo siúd nach bhfuil riachtanais ar bith acu.'

Rinne na rannpháirtithe a mhór den dóigh ar chuidigh Glór na Móna leo caidrimh a thógáil le daoine eile nár réitigh siad leis ar

scoil. Lena chois sin, chuidigh siad leo bheith neamhspleách ó chairde scoile trína spreagadh le caidrimh úra a thógáil le páistí as scoileanna áitiúla eile.

Luaigh na tuismitheoirí an drochthionchar a bhí ag an pháindéim Covid-19 ar na páistí le druidim na gcumann óige, gan a bheith ábalta a gcairde a fheiceáil agus a bheith sóisialta ar bhonn seachtainiúil ó bhí Márta 2020 ann, cé go ndearnadh iarracht na seirbhísí a sholáthar ar líne, rud a mhol an fócasghrúpa go mór.

'Bhí sé ina streachailt ag m'iníon. Bhí sé ina streachailt aici i rith an ama agus b'éigean di dul ar scoil le linn na dianghlasála mar gur oibríthe bunriachtanacha sláinte muid agus streachailt ollmhór a bhí ann, bhí sé thuas seal thíos seal...Mar sin de, tá an cumann seo normálta di, tá normálta de dhíth uirthi. Cluinim go minic, 'níor mhaith le duine ar bith labhairt liom sa rang, níor mhaith leo suí in aice liom' agus ansin insíonn sí scéalta faoin chumann, 'tháinig duine is labhair siad liom'.'

Bhí go leor den phlé dírithe ar an chomparáid idir eispéireas a bpáistí ar scoil agus an soláthar a fhaigheann siad fríd an obair óige. Bhí meascán tuairimí ann maidir leis an tsoláthar a fuair a bpáistí ar scoil. Mhol cuid acu an obair atáthar a dhéanamh:

'Thug an scoil s'againne speisialtóirí isteach ó shainionad uathachais mar go bhfuil an oiread sin páistí ar an scoil a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais acu...tá sin de dhíth in achan scoil.'

'Nuair a labhraím le daoine eile, tuismitheoirí as scoileanna

Béarla agus a leithéidí, bíonn a fhios agat go bhfuil siad ag troid ach tá scoil mo pháiste ag déanamh a seacht ndícheall tacú léi, leis an bhuiséad atá acu.'

Agus daoine eile a rá gur chóir níos mó tacaíocht a chur ar fáil, go háirithe maidir le glacadh le daoine agus ionchuimsiú:

'Ní mór labhairt faoi riachtanais speisialta níos mó, níl a fhios agam i dtionóil scoile nó cad é ach deir páistí eile rudaí amhail 'you're weird' 'you're being stupid', caithfear dul i ngleic leis sin'.

Dúirt tuismitheoir amháin gur bhain sí a páiste ó ghaelscoil mar gur dúradh léi nár chóir dá páiste bheith i scoil phríomhshrutha dhátheangach sa chéad dul síos. Ina theannta sin, bhí easpa tacaíochta ann don pháiste agus níor tugadh tacaíocht aonarach riachtanas speisialta don pháiste, rud a bhí ag brath ar próiséas ráitis ach a raibh moill leis.

Mhol an tuismitheoir áirithe sin gur chóir gaelscoil speisialta oideachais a bhunú san earnáil mar gur mhothaigh sí go raibh a páiste thíos leis mar nach raibh an deis aici foghlaim trí mheán na Gaeilge.

Bhog an plé ar aghaidh chuig an dóigh a ndeachaigh labhairt na Gaeilge i bhfeidhm ar na páistí. Labhair formhór na rannpháirtithe go han-dearfach faoin dóigh a ndeachaigh an Ghaeilge i bhfeidhm ar chumas labhartha agus cumarsáide a bpáistí:

'Leis an fhírinne a dhéanamh, mhothaigh mé gur tháinig feabhas ar chumas labhartha mo pháiste ó tháinig sé anseo

agus d'éirigh a chuid cainte níos soiléire. Sílim gurb é an fáth leis sin go bhfuil sé in áit nach ndéantar breithiúnas air, maidir lena chaint, a iompar, ach go ndéantar breithiúnas air ar scoil. Bíonn muinín aige anseo agus tá feabhas tagtha ar a chumas cainte.'

Dúirt cuid den tuismitheoirí, áfach, nach labhróidh a bpáistí Gaeilge agus iad sa chumann óige. Dhearbhaigh siad nach bhfuil fadhb ag na páistí an Ghaeilge a thuigbheáil ach dúirt tuismitheoir amháin go síleann sí go mbaineann sé le próiseáil a bhaineann le riachtanas a páiste agus go gcuireann labhairt na Gaeilge trína chéile é. Dúirt siad go mbíonn an fhadhb chéanna ann ar scoil ach go mbíonn i bhfad níos mó brú orthu Gaeilge a labhairt ar scoil. Sa chumann, spreagtar iad agus labhraítear leo i nGaeilge ach ní chuirtear pionós orthu as gan Gaeilge a labhairt. Léiríodh sin sna moltaí a tugadh d'fhoireann Ghlór na Móna; luaigh na tuismitheoirí an cur chuige measúil agus cineálta a bhíonn ag an fhoireann óige leis na daoine óga agus an dóigh a gcumasáíonn siad na húsáideoirí seirbhíse.

Maidir leis na seirbhísí eile óige sa cheantar mháguaird, dúirt formhór na dtuismitheoirí nach gcuireann siad a bpáistí chucu, nó nár mhaith lena bpáistí dul chuig imeachtaí agus cumainn eile. Dúirt tuismitheoir amháin go dtéann a páiste chuig cumann óige gar don áit a gcónaíonn a páiste i gceantar eile sa chathair ach go bhfuil an chuma ar an scéal go mothaíonn an páiste i bhfad níos compordaí i nGlór na Móna mar nach bhfuil sé lán le páistí atá ar scoil lena páiste agus go dtig lena páiste bheith ar a shuaimhneas dá bharr.

Labhair an chuid is mó de na tuismitheoirí faoin easpa soláthair

san obair óige do pháistí a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu agus mhínigh siad nach bhfuil tuigbheáil ar a riachtanais mar sin de, ní féidir le seirbhísí eile freastal orthu. Léirigh siad an tábhacht arís go bhfuil an tseirbhís ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge:

‘Tuigeann na páistí go bhfuil na páistí atá thart timpeall orthu mar an gcéanna leo, agus tá siad ag úsáid a gcuid Gaeilge, mar sin tá siad ag foghlaim na Gaeilge, agus níos mó, agus sin an rud maith faoi. Mar go bhfuil siad ag déanamh cumarsáid trí mheán na Gaeilge.’

Phléigh an grúpa na seirbhísí breise a ba mhaithe leo a fheiceáil i nGlór na Móna le heispéireas a bpáistí a fheabhsú agus iad ag dul chuig an chumann óige. Rinneadh moltaí amhail níos mó turas agus oiliúint chuí rialta don fhoireann le tacú leo dul i ngleic le riachtanais choimpléascacha na bpáistí. Luaigh tuismitheoir amháin go raibh sí buartha gur chuir a páiste suas meáchan, go háirithe le linn na dianghlasála agus an cumann druidte, mar sin de, mhol sí go dtabharfaí isteach aclaíocht de chineál éigin sa chlár nó go dtarraingeofaí aird ar shlí mhaireachtála atá sláintiúil. Ar a bharr sin, mhol tuismitheoirí oíche bhreise sa tseachtain mar go gcuirfeadh sin arís le scileanna sóisialta na bpáistí.

Fócasghrúpa tuismitheora 2 (Sinsir)

Tuismitheoirí na n-úsáideoirí seirbhíse is sine a bhí san fhócasghrúpa dheireanach. Bhí ochtar san fhócasghrúpa seo (beirt fhear agus seisear ban). Cosúil leis na seisiúin eile, cuireadh i gcuimhne do na rannpháirtithe go raibh siad páirteach ar bhonn deonach agus go dtiocfadh leo imeacht am ar bith gan iarmhairtí diúltacha. Cuireadh i gcuimhne dóibh fosta go ndéanfaí taifeadadh gutha ar mhaithe le tras-scríbhinní agus go bhfaighfí réidh leis nuair a chríochnófaí an tuairisc taighde.

Tosaíodh an plé le comhrá faoin dóigh a ndeachaigh na seirbhísí i nGlór na Móna i bhfeidhm ar a bpáistí. Luadh gur ceann de na gnéithe lárnacha den tseirbhís i nGlór na Móna forbairt ar mhuintir na ndaoine óga agus gur sin an fáth a bhfuil ag éirí go maith leis na húsáideoirí seirbhíse. Dúirt tuismitheoirí fosta go dtugann an cumann óige deiseanna riachtanacha sóisialta dá bpáistí.

‘I ndáiríre, ní raibh cara ar bith ag mo mhac, chuaigh sé ar scoil is a leithéidí ach ní raibh saol sóisialta aige agus chuir sin isteach air ‘Níl cara ar bith agam, níl cara ar bith agam’ ach tháinig sé díreach isteach anseo anocht agus thosaigh sé a labhairt le daoine eile láithreach. Tá a fhios agat, tá a chloigeann in airde agus é ag siúl, tá sé muiníneach ag teacht anseo agus tá an chuma ar an scéal go bhfuil sé ar a shuaimhneas anseo.’

Thug na tuismitheoirí léargas ar an tábhacht a bhí leis an tseirbhís i dtógáil caidreamh lena bpiaraí agus ag tabhairt deis do na páistí cairde úra a dhéanamh.

Labhair na tuismitheoirí faoin tionchar a bhí ag an dianghlasáil Covid-19 orthu agus dúirt an chuid is mó acu go raibh níos mó imní ar na daoine óga agus iad scartha óna bpiaraí agus gan an deis acu bualadh lena bpiaraí agus lena dteaghlaigh.

Dúirt siad, áfach, go raibh an clár fíorúil agus na gníomhaíochtaí ar líne sa tsamhradh go hiontach agus gur chuidigh siad leis na páistí teagmháil a choinneáil lena chéile. Luaigh tuismitheoir amháin gur chuidigh na gníomhaíochtaí ar líne lena páiste a bheith ina mhúinteoir agus gur theagasc sé di an dóigh le pancóga a dhéanamh, rud a chur lena neamhspleáchas.

'Bhí na rudaí sin chomh tábhachtach dá neamhspleáchas féin, tá a fhios agat, mar ba bhreá liom go gcónódh mo pháiste leis féin amach anseo agus saol mar sin a bheith aige. Mar sin de, agus eisean i gceannas agus é do mo theagasc agus ag spreagadh baill eile an ghrúpa le bheith páirteach, chonaic mé ar dhóigh eile ar fad é.'

Maidir leis na seirbhísí eile atá ar fáil do dhaoine óga sa cheantar mháguaird, luaigh na tuismitheoirí na deacrachtaí a bhíonn acu ag iarraidh na daoine óga a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu a spreagadh le freastal ar sheirbhísí nach riarann go sonrach ar a riachtanais féin.

Léirigh na tuismitheoirí an caidreamh atá le foireann Ghlór na Móna mar go n-oibríonn siad sna scoileanna áitiúla agus

cuireann an Ghaeilge na páistí ar a suaimhneas agus meallann sin daoine óga chuig an tseirbhís. Mhaígh tuismitheoir amháin gur buntáiste é go ndéantar rudaí trí mheán na Gaeilge agus go mothaíonn siad mar chuid de rud:

'Mothaíonn sé mar chuid den phobal mar gheall ar rud éigin a bhaineann leis an teanga, tá sé páirteach ann, mar sin, sílim go bhfuil seirbhís trí mheán na Gaeilge ina buntáiste dóibh.'

Bhog an plé ar aghaidh chuig na moltaí forbartha a bhí acu leis an tseirbhís a fheabhsú do na húsáideoirí seirbhíse sna ceithre bliana amach romhainn.

Luaigh tuismitheoir amháin ceist maidir le feasacht agus gur chóir oiliúint a chur ar fáil, b'fhéidir, faoin aistriú go hógántacht do dhaoine óga a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu agus gur chóir plé a bheith ann faoi chaidrimh agus sláinte mhothúcháinach/ghnéis.

'Tá mo mhac ag tiontú isteach ina fhear ach ní thuigeann sé go hiomlán na hathruithe atá ag teacht leis an chaitheachas agus glacann muid leis gur daoine óga iad a bhfuil uathachas orthu agus nach bhfuil suim acu i gcaidrimh agus nach dtuigeann siad na rudaí atá ag tarlú ina gcorp. Ach is cinnte nach bhfuil sé ag iarraidh labhairt faoi nó a luaithe is a deirim aon rud, déanann sé neamhaird, mar sin de, b'fhéidir go mbeadh na comhráití beaga sin riachtanach, go háirithe i measc a bpiaraí. Agus is cinnte go bhfuil cuid mhór athruithe ag dul ar aghaidh.'

Mhol tuismitheoir eile go dtabharfaí isteach aclaíocht de chineál éigin sa chlár mar gur mhaith leis go bhfoghlaimeodh a pháiste faoi nósanna sláintiúla agus faoin dóigh le roghanna níos fearr a dhéanamh. D'aontaigh tuismitheoirí eile agus mhaígh siad gur mhaith leo go ndéanfadh a bpáistí aclaíocht de chineál éigin in áit a bheith ina suí ag imirt cluichí ríomhaire nó ag amharc ar an teilifís ina n-am féin. D'áitigh siad go gcaithfí an spórt a dhéanamh sultmhar agus tarraingteach do pháistí a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu agus a bhféadfaí gan chumas a bheith acu sa spórt, agus nár chóir don spórt a bheith chomh hiomaíoch is a bhíonn sé ar scoil:

'Ní mór dúinn neamhaird a dhéanamh den iomaíocht agus níos mó béim a chur ar an tábhacht a bhaineann le slí mhaireachtála atá sláintiúil agus gníomhach. Ní shílím go bhfuil siad ag fáil an chúraim sin.'

Mhol na tuismitheoirí oíche bhreise sa tseachtain le níos mó deiseanna sóisialta a thabhairt do na daoine óga. D'aontaigh tuismitheoirí eile sa ghrúpa leis sin ach dúirt tuismitheoir amháin go mbeadh seirbhís iontaofa iompair ina chuidiú mar go bhfuil tuismitheoirí ann nach bhfuil tiomáint acu agus iad ag teacht as ceantair eile sa chathair le freastal ar na seirbhísí mar gurb é an t-aon chumann óige lán-Ghaeilge a riarann ar pháistí a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu.

D'aontaigh baill eile sa ghrúpa leis an mholadh sin agus dúradh go bhféadfadh sé cur le líon na ndaoine a théann chuig an chumann óige. Dúirt tuismitheoir amháin,

'mhothaigh mo mhac go raibh dualgas air teacht anseo anocht, is breá leis an áit agus mhothaigh sé go raibh air teacht anseo le tacú leis agus le cuidiú leis an áit a fhorbairt dó féin agus dá chairde.'

D'aontaigh na tuismitheoirí eile sa ghrúpa leis sin agus mhol siad an fhoireann as an obair a dhéanann siad agus as timpeallacht shábháilte a chruthú do na húsáideoirí seirbhíse, áit a dtig leo bheith sóisialta, agus go dtig leis na tuismitheoirí muinín a bheith acu go dtugtar aire dá bpáistí i nGlór na Móna.

Ionadaí ó Fhóram Óige na sé chontae

Shíl an grúpa stiúrtha a bhfuil daoine óga ina bhun go mbeadh sé tábhachtach ionchur a fháil ó ionadaí de chuid Fóram Óige na sé chontae a bheadh ábalta labhairt ar chearta agus ar an tsoláthar óige sna sé chontae do dhaoine a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta acu. Rinneadh teagmháil leis an leas-stiúrthóir ar Fhóram Óige na sé chontae agus cuireadh agallamh air. Tá níos mó ná 20 bliain de thaithí aige ag teagasc, san obair óige agus ag obair le tionscadail óige san earnáil.

Thug an rannpháirtí léargas iontach ar stair agus ar staid reatha na hearnála óige Gaeilge agus mhaígh sé go bhfuil an earnáil óg i gcomparáid le hearnáil an Bhéarla: 'tháinig an obair óige Ghaeilge chun cinn, nach raibh ar an fhód ach 10 mbliana agus atá go fóill ag iarraidh a bealach féin a aimsiú maidir le forbairt cleachtais, foireann, cáilíochtaí agus na rudaí uilig a bhaineann

leis sin. San am a chuaigh thart, ní raibh caint ann faoin tsoláthar óige lán-Ghaeilge. Maidir le cearta agus gan reachtaíocht tacaíochta don Ghaeilge, níl aon chosaint reachtúil ná cosaint cearta ann.

'Rinne an rannpháirtí tagairt den bhunús pobalbhunaithe atá ag an earnáil Gaeilge agus bhí meas aige ar chúlra is comhthéacs na hearnála i gcoitinne: Leag siad (Glór na Móna) an bhuncloch don tsoláthar óige lán-Ghaeilge agus is eagraíocht measartha nua í i gcomhthéacs na hoibre óige.'

Labhair an rannpháirtí cuid mhór maidir leis na bearnaí sa tsoláthar óige, go háirithe dóibh siúd a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu:

'Bearnaí sa tsoláthar, bearnaí sna seirbhísí, easpa foirne atá cáilithe, rochtain ar shíceolaithe, arís, tá na bearnaí seo in achan earnáil den oideachas, chan amháin san earnáil Gaeilge.'

Rinneadh tagairt ar leith den déimeagrafaic socheacnamaíoch san earnáil Gaeilge, go háirithe maidir le ceantair atá faoi mhíbhuntáiste agus faoin ghá atá le seirbhísí cearta óige do dhaoine óga:

'Baineann stair na hoibre óige le caidrimh a thógáil do pháistí a thagann as cúlraí atá faoi mhíbhuntáiste agus atá imeallaithe. Tá sin amhlaidh leis an earnáil Gaeilge agus in amanna is cnámh spairne pholaitiúil í an teanga.'

Níl aon mhaitheas aige sin do pháiste arb í an Ghaeilge a chéad teanga agus atá i dteideal d'oideachas foirmeálta agus neamhfhoirmeálta, gan trácht fiú ar pháistí a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu agus a labhraíonn Gaeilge.'

Rinne sé tagairt den tábhacht a bhaineann leis an easpa maoinithe agus é ag labhairt faoi na bearnaí sna seirbhísí óige:

'Tá tábhacht leis an mhaoiniú. Níl cur chuige don mhaoiniú leanúnach fhadtéarmach ann don earnáil neamhfhoirmeálta...Is féidir linn a fheiceáil an dóigh a bhfuil cearta teanga páistí i gcontúirt. Tá muid ag labhairt faoi bhearnaí sa tsoláthar. Tá muid ag labhairt faoi pháistí a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu agus faoi leithcheal. Ach baineann sé uilig le buiséid. B'éigean do Ghlór na Móna, atá mar chuid d'earnáil na Gaeilge, troid go fíochmhar le tacaíocht a fháil.'

Dúirt an rannpháirtí go bhfuil bearna ar leith ann nach bhfuil ag riar ar úsáideoirí seirbhíse atá idir seirbhísí óige agus aosaigh óga agus go gcaithfear aird a dhíriú air sin agus maoiniú a chur ina threo. Mhol sé fosta gur cheart don earnáil óige Gaeilge 'nascadh' le príomheagraíochtaí a bhfuil saineolas acu ar chearta páistí agus a bhfuil ardmheas acu ar a luachanna sa dóigh is go mbeidh abhcóideacht agus stocaireacht le haghaidh soláthar óige Gaeilge níos fearr mar chuid de chur chuige atá bunaithe ar chearta ar leibhéal náisiúnta agus idirnáisiúnta.

Anailís ar na torthaí

I ndiaidh dom gach tacar sonraí a thras-scríobh agus cur síos a thabhairt ar phlé an fhócasghrúpa agus na n-agallamh, cuireadh na sonraí a bailíodh i dtoll a chéile trí bhunachar sonraí do néal focal, rud a léirigh na príomhthéamaí agus na heochairfhocail a bhí sa tras-scríbhinn sonraí. Is féidir an néal focal den tras-scríbhinn sonraí a fheiceáil thíos:



Tháinig na téamaí thuas chun tosaigh sna comhráití leis na rannpháirtithe éagsúla mar fhreagra ar na ceistanna seo a leanas:

1. Cad é an tionchar a bhí ag na seirbhísí agus na tionscadail a chuir Glór na Móna ar fáil ar pháistí in earnáil na Gaeilge?

2. Ar tugadh athruithe faoi deara maidir le hiompar fisiceach, sóisialta agus mothúchánach nó le cumas cumarsáide na n-úsáideoirí seirbhíse ó ghlac siad páirt i seirbhísí Glór na Móna?

3. Cad iad na seirbhísí eile atá ar fáil d'úsáideoirí seirbhíse sa cheantar mháguaird, má tá seirbhísí eile ann? An mbeidh úsáideoirí seirbhísí toilteanach freastal orthu?

4. Cad iad na háiseanna, na hacmhainní nó na seirbhísí eile a ba mhaith le húsáideoirí seirbhísí agus caomhnóirí a fheiceáil i nGlór na Móna sna ceithre bliana amach romhainn?

Léiríonn na torthaí go ndeachaigh na seirbhísí i nGlór na Móna go mór i bhfeidhm ar na húsáideoirí seirbhíse agus a dteaghlach ó bunaíodh an cumann óige Gaeilge atá dírithe ar riachtanais bhreise. Thug na húsáideoirí seirbhíse agus a dtuismitheoirí ardmholadh don tseirbhís mar gheall go spreagann sí forbairt shóisialta is phearsanta na ndaoine óga a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu. Chruthaigh an tseirbhís spás normálta sábháilte

spreagúil do dhaoine óga a mbeadh deacracht acu caidrimh a thógáil agus cumarsáid a dhéanamh le daoine eile i dtimpeallacht sóisialta óige nach raibh dírithe ar dhaoine óga a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu. Tá an gné teangeolaíoch den tseirbhís ina bhuntáiste den chumann óige agus na húsáideoirí seirbhíse agus a dtuismitheoirí ag moladh agus ag tacú le húsáid na Gaeilge mar mhodh cumarsáide agus teanga oibre an chláir. Chothaigh úsáid na Gaeilge sa tseirbhís úinéireacht agus dáimh i measc na ndaoine óga agus spreagann sin iad le suim a bheith acu ina bhféiniúlacht chultúrtha a bhaineann le húsáid na teanga. Bhí tionchar nach beag ag an tseirbhís ar na daoine óga a d'fhás aníos agus iad ag dul ann agus ar tugadh deiseanna dóibh a bheith ag obair go deonach agus ag obair leis an tseirbhís; ag cruthú deiseanna le scileanna ceannaireachta agus comhoibríthe a léiriú le baill eile foirne, rud a chuir le deiseanna infhostaitheachta na n-úsáideoirí seirbhíse.

Labhair na tuismitheoirí go háirithe faoin dóigh ar spreag an cumann óige na daoine óga lena muinín, a bhfeasacht shóisialta agus a scileanna cumarsáide agus caidrimh a fhorbairt. D'aithin na tuismitheoirí go háirithe an droch-thionchar a bhí ag an easpa seirbhísí óige ar na daoine óga nuair a stopadh na seirbhísí de bharr na dianghlása agus ar an dóigh ar thug athoscailt na seirbhíse dóchas dóibh arís.

Léirigh na húsáideoirí seirbhíse agus na tuismitheoirí nach bhfuil rogha ar bith eile ann maidir le seirbhísí óige do dhaoine óga a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu i mBéal Feirste, go háirithe trí

mheán na Gaeilge. Bhí an chuma ar an scéal go raibh leisce ar na tuismitheoirí agus na daoine óga araon freastal ar sheirbhísí eile nach raibh an tacaíocht sin do riachtanais bhreise ina chuid lárnach den tseirbhís. Bhí an chuma ar an scéal fosta go raibh an Ghaeilge tábhachtach agus mheall sin rannpháirteachas ó na húsáideoirí seirbhíse agus na tuismitheoirí.

Maidir le háiseanna agus acmhainní breise agus moltaí a bhí ag na húsáideoirí seirbhíse agus na tuismitheoirí le soláthar an chumainn óige agus eispéaras na ndaoine óige a fheabhsú, rinneadh roinnt moltaí nach féidir a dhéanamh gan tacaíocht ó Big Lottery Fund Project.

Moladh níos mó gléasanna teicneolaíochta a cheannach, níos mó turas agus méadú ar fhoirgneamh an chumainn óige. Ceapadh go raibh na gnéithe sin tábhachtach leis an tseirbhís a fheabhsú. Luaigh roinnt mhaith de na rannpháirtithe go gcuideodh aclaíocht mar chuid den chlár le sláinte agus slí mhaireachtála atá sláintiúil a chur chun cinn. Moladh deiseanna a chur ar fáil le ceardlanna agus plé a dhéanamh faoi shláinte ghnéis agus mhothúchánach na ndaoine óga, go háirithe dóibh siúd a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu. Moladh fosta gur chóir oiliúint agus deiseanna a chur ar fáil do na húsáideoirí seirbhíse fríd an chláir le hamharc ar shlíthe beatha agus ar ghairmeacha éagsúla agus le neamhspleáchas agus scileanna saoil amhail ceachtanna cócaireachta a chur chun cinn.

Cuirfear na moltaí sin faoi bhráid an ghrúpa stiúrtha a bhfuil daoine óga ina bhun agus an sainghrúpa stiúrtha chomh maith le bainistíocht Ghlór na Móna le bheith san áireamh sa phleanáil a dhéanfar don cheithre bliana atá romhainn agus amach anseo.

Srianta an staidéir

agus deiseanna le haghaidh tuilleadh taighde

Amhail gach píosa taighde, d'aithin mé na srianta seo a leanas mar thoradh ar an staidéar seo:

- Rinneadh an taighde le linn paindéim dhomhanda, rud a chur srian ar an bhailiú sonraí agus ar líon na rannpháirtithe.
- Rinneadh an taighde in am scála a bhí teoranta agus bhí spriocdháta ann.
- B'fhéidir go bhféadfaí a rá go raibh líon íseal rannpháirtithe ann agus go gcuirfeadh níos mó rannpháirtithe le bailíocht agus le hábhar na sonraí.
- D'fhéadfaí teagmháil a dhéanamh le níos mó de na páirtithe leasmhara dá dtiocfaí an t-am scála don bhailiú sonraí a shíneadh.
- Bhí an bailiú sonraí dúshlánach mar gheall ar an phaindéim dhomhanda agus na srianta maidir le sábháilteacht agus scaradh sóisialta.

Aithním go bhfuil tuilleadh deiseanna taighde ann mar gheall ar thorthaí an taighde seo agus bheadh suim agam sin a fhiosrú amach anseo.



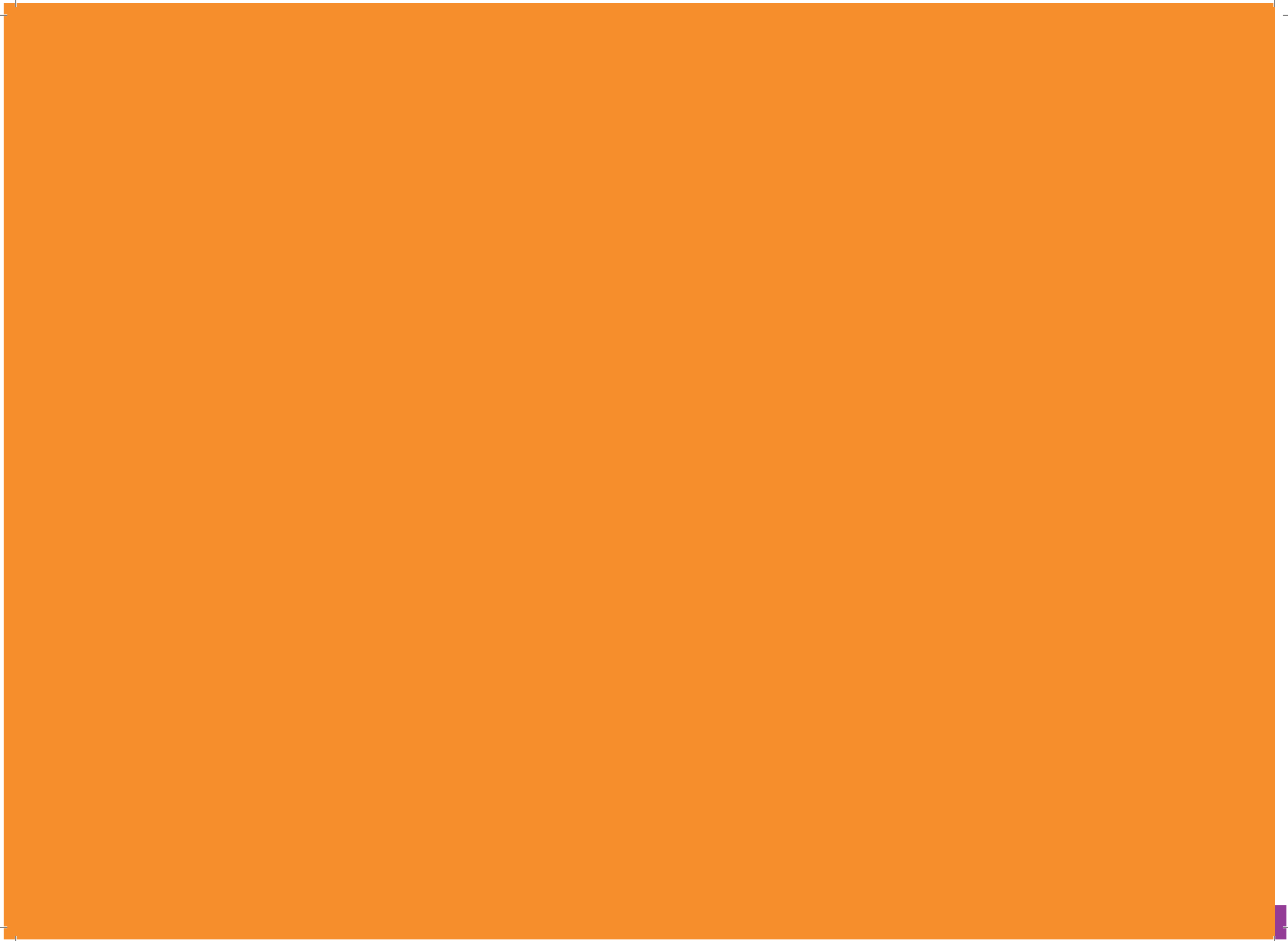
Conclúidí

Rinneadh iniúchadh sa taighde seo ar na seirbhísí óige do dhaoine óga a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu in earnáil an ghaeleachais i mBéal Feirste. Cé gur earnáil oideachais iontach óg atá ann sna sé chontae, tá an obair óige Ghaeilge níos óige agus níos tearcforbartha fós agus tá i bhfad níos mó taighde agus iniúchadh de dhíth le seirbhís chuimsitheach fhorleathan shásúil a sholáthar do na daoine óga san earnáil Gaeilge. Léirigh na seirbhísí ceannródaíocha i nGlór na Móna bealach a dtig le daoine óga a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu rochtain a fháil ar oideachas neamhfhoirmeálta, teagmháil shóisialta agus scileanna luachmhara saoil agus pearsanta trí mheán na Gaeilge. Is seirbhís ar leith shóisialta, chultúrtha agus oideachasúil í do dhaoine óga in earnáil na Gaeilge nach mbeadh an deis acu an t-eispéireas céanna a fháil trí sheirbhísí eile óige nach bhfuil riachtanais bhreise na n-úsáideoirí seirbhíse ina chuid lárnach den tseirbhís. Mar sin de, tá géarghá leis na seirbhísí óige Gaeilge a fhorbairt agus le hairgead agus tacaíocht reachtúil a chinntiú sa dóigh is nach mbeidh na daoine óga san earnáil imeallaithe ná nach ndéanfar leithcheal orthu mar gheall ar easpa seirbhísí san oideachas neamhfhoirmeálta trí mheán na Gaeilge.









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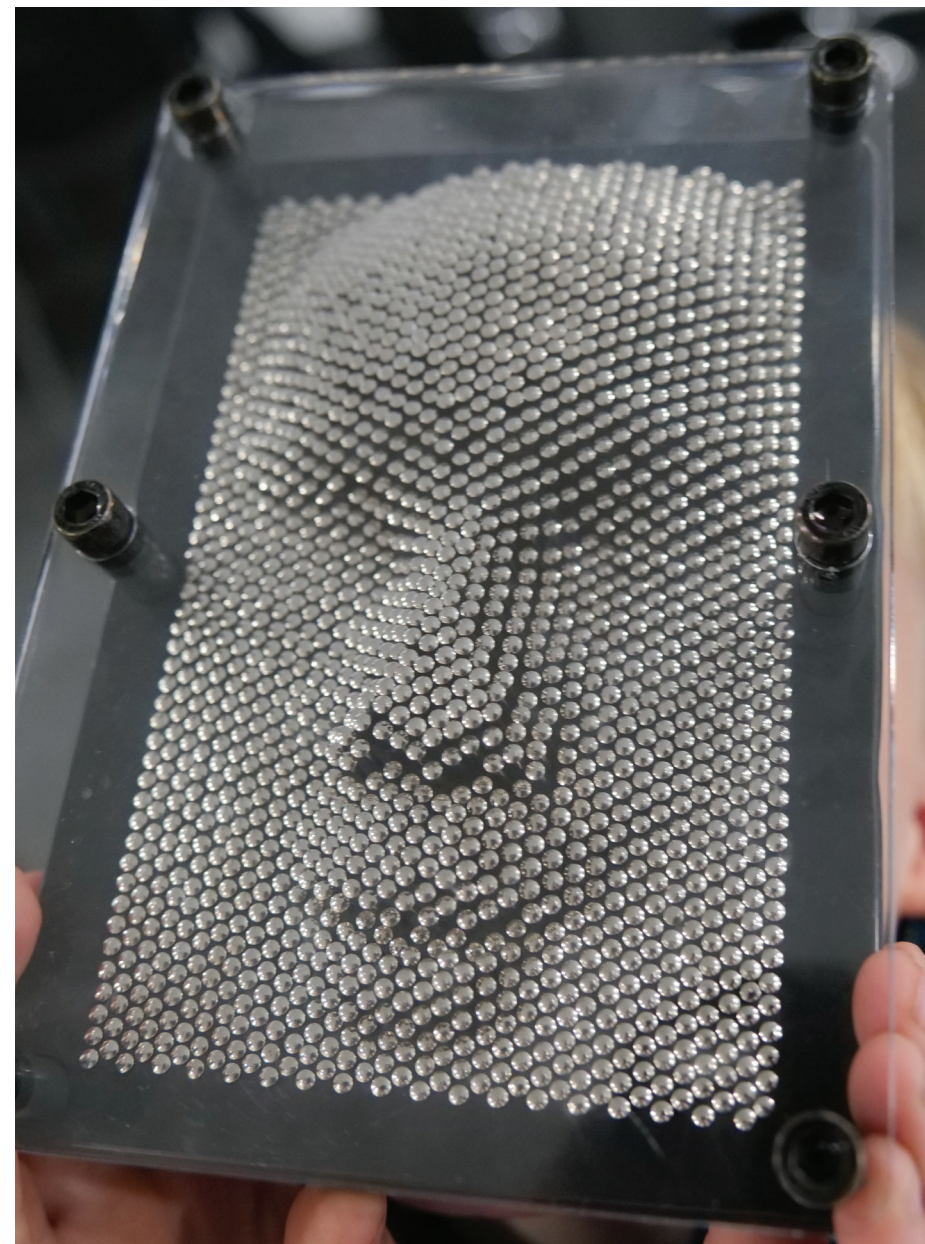
Introduction

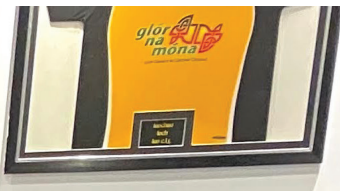
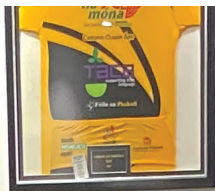
This research report will identify, explore and evaluate gaps in resources and facilities in Irish-medium youth work provision in Belfast as of Autumn 2020. In this research, the importance of youth work in the lives of young people will be discussed, paying particular attention to young people who are educated in the Irish-medium education sector and those with additional learning, emotional and social needs.

A participatory research approach comprised of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions forms the data collection of this research. The research questions used for these sessions were informed by a previous data scoping exercise through a survey designed by a Youth-led Steering Group based at Glór na Móna.

The data will be thematically coded to highlight gaps in provision from various participants including parents, service users, service leaders and appropriate stakeholders. The genesis of this research is resultant upon the discussion and questioning carried out by the Glór na Móna youth-led steering group who requested for this study to be carried out. This research report is supplementary in support of a funding bid to the National Lottery's 'Big Lottery Fund' made by Glór na Móna, October 2020 in order to enhance their services and the experience of their service users.

A brief history of the Irish-medium Education sector and Irish-medium youth work services will now be discussed.





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Is Eagraíocht phobail agus óige i Glór na Móna a sholáthraíonn réimse seirbhíse lingeacha, cultúrtha, óige agus tacaíochtaí a sholáthar do phobal na Gaeltige atá ann agus atá ag teacht chun cinn i mBeal Feirste cois cainn.

Mul an Óige agus Tír-fáil

Glór na Móna is a community and multi-linguistic, cultural, youth and music services for our local community with supporting the current and emerging Irish language speaking community in the Belfast area.

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Irish-medium education and Irish-medium youth work services: A History

Irish-medium education in Northern Ireland is a relatively new and unique sector of education which was spearheaded by a group of Irish language activists, residing in an urban Gaeltacht (an Irish speaking area), in West Belfast in the late 1960s (O'Baoill, 2007). These families established a school in 1971 with only nine pupils, notwithstanding government opposition, during an extremely turbulent time of civil unrest in Belfast. Despite being a relatively young sector of education, the growth and demand for IME has been rife over the past 50 years (McKendry, 2007) with Irish-medium schools of pre-school level, primary level and secondary level being set up all over the six northern counties. Statistics show that almost 7,000 children across Northern Ireland are in receipt of Irish-medium education with Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (The Council for Irish-medium Education, 2020) reporting a 41% increase of in-year enrolments during the last decade.

Irish-medium schools and services follow the 'immersion education model', a system which helps children acquire fluency in the language naturally by providing daily exposure and experience of an entirely Irish language focused environment. Immersion education boasts many advantages of bilingualism as researched by Cummins (1998, p.3) who claims that 'bilingual children exhibit a greater sensitivity to linguistic meanings and may be more flexible in their thinking than monolingual children.' The acquisition of Irish through the immersion education model

aims to support children's communication and interpersonal skills, their confidence and makes them feel a sense of identity through developing their cultural awareness and participation in language revitalisation. Language teaching for revitalisation/reclamation involves high stakes language objectives such as re-establishing a language community, while also experiencing disproportionate under-resourcing in terms of funding, materials, training, and contexts for language use (Fishman, 1991; McCarty, 2003). This is significant because immersion schools and services are widely seen as the surest way to restore language abilities in younger generations who no longer have access to their language in their homes (Ó Baoill, 2007; Kipp, 2009; Hinton, 2011; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014). This is particularly relevant to the Irish-medium sector as most children attending schools and services come from homes where Irish is not the first language of their parents and guardians. Both formal and informal language immersion programmes are crucial for the child learner whose L1 (first language) is not the language through which they are educated. Glór na Móna's service provision is central to the role of consolidating informal learning and development opportunities for children of the Irish-medium education sector in Belfast.

The services based at Glór na Móna will now be discussed.

Setting the Scene: Youth Work Services at Glór na Móna

Glór na Móna is an Irish-language community hub based in West Belfast which offers services to Irish-medium families, students and community groups in the surrounding area. Glór na Móna Óige uses youth work, youth support and youth activities to enhance the participation of young people in the revival of the Irish Language (Charity Commission NI, 2016). Within this context, youth work is seen not just as a tool by which young people can develop and support their personal, social and educational development (Devlin and Gunning, 2009) but also has a pivotal role to play in the revival of the Irish language and the regeneration of disadvantaged communities, particularly in relation to the foundations of the Irish-medium sector, as discussed later. Glór na Móna Óige is at the forefront of this work in Belfast and currently delivers and supports youth work provision through the medium of Irish in the following areas; Upper Springfield; Falls Road; Lenadoon and North Belfast. This work involves the provision of locally based youth clubs; youth programmes; and accredited training programmes for all staff involved in order to deliver a pioneering and innovative programme throughout youth services.

Over the past three years the projects at Glór na Móna have undergone rapid growth which has seen an increase in the number and range of programmes delivered, the size of the budget being managed, the amount of service users and the numbers of staff employed. This growth is supported by statistics shown by the surge in service users from 2015; originally Glór na Móna's services operated with four youth club provisions on a four-hour, part-time basis which has now expanded to running 15

individual youth work programmes across Belfast (Glór na Móna, 2020). The demand for youth work services in the Irish-medium sector is set to further expand with yearly increased school enrolment figures in the sector. In line with the current demand for Irish-medium youth work services expected to increase further, there is an urgent need to address existing funding, training, accommodation, resources and facilities in order to support this growth.

Despite its growth and popularity, both formal and informal education through the medium of Irish, in Northern Ireland has not received the same levels of state support and funding, particularly from the Department of Education, as has heritage language education in the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Irish received official recognition in Northern Ireland for the first time with the signing of the Belfast Agreement, also known as the Good Friday Agreement, in 1998. The Belfast Agreement helped to create a political environment favourable to IME, and called on

'all participants to recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities ...'¹

1. The Belfast Agreement, 1998. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-belfast-agreement> (Accessed on 18th October 2020).

The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998² states that:

“ *It shall be the duty of the Department (of Education) to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish-medium education.* ”

Not only has the lack of statutory support been apparent with regards to language learning and support but also in relation to the response of providing children with additional needs access to Irish-medium education and services. The majority of Irish-medium schools in Northern Ireland are located in and established by predominantly Catholic, working-class community groups and in areas of high multiple-level deprivation. This is substantiated by evidence compiled by Valadez-Martinez and Hirsch (2018) which shows that Foyle, West Belfast and North Belfast experience the highest levels of child poverty in Northern Ireland whilst these areas along with Newry and Mourne Districts display the highest concentration of Irish speakers (Mercator Education, 2004). Research literature has shown that with an increase in the level of deprivation experienced by a particular area or social group, this too correlates to the increase of additional social, behavioural, emotional and educational needs experienced by children and adults within that area (Menziez et. al, 2016; Reay, 2014). Glór na Móna, being directly located in the area placed in the top five areas of the **‘Multiple Deprivation Measure Rank’** (NISRA, 2010,) have recognised the increase and demand for informal youth work provision for children with additional

2. Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1998/1759/contents>.



learning needs through establishing their service ‘Sólás na nÓg’, a youth work service expanding over two age groups for one night per week allowing children with additional social, emotional and behavioural needs to access youth work services and informal education, pertaining to their individual needs through the medium of Irish. This service has been ongoing since 2019 and is in dire need of further support, training and funding. This service has been reliant upon several indefinite and unfixed funding pots which, despite being crucial to the establishment and development of the service, have been deficient in supplying the necessary provisions, training and interventions for the programme to fully excel and expand further. The provision and support for Special Educational Needs in the Irish-medium sector will now be examined.

Special Educational Needs in the Irish-medium Sector

The **'Survey of Provision for Special Educational Needs in Irish-Medium Primary Schools'** (1999), by the Department of Education in conjunction with the Education Training Inspectorate, stated that

“ *there is a need across and within Irish-medium schools generally for a clearer, collective understanding and consistency of approach to SEN policy, procedures and practices, in relation to the needs of children who are learning in two languages.*

(p.3)



This claim is further substantiated by research carried out by Pobal (2010, p.1), which states that

'teachers, parents and professional support services have all expressed the need for better information and guidance with particular reference to SEN and bilingualism, SEN and immersion learning and/or the necessary provisions for the SEN (assessments, supports, resources), especially when the first language of the child is Irish.'

This provision nevertheless, is challenged, in the Special Educational Needs of Bilingual (Irish-English) Children paper (DE and Pobal, 2009) which highlights the importance of the advantages associated with bilingual education, especially for children with special educational needs, however, draws on international literature which states that:

'parents have been advised by professionals to raise their children monolingually' (p.32)

It is therefore difficult to deny that the Irish-medium sector lacks in provision and experience with special educational needs compared to that within the English-medium sector. This is due to both the youth of the sector, minimal research literature and the lack of resources, sector specific training and support provided by relevant educational stakeholders. Further research highlights the gaps in provision which still persist over 20 years since the ETI's sectoral audit and recommendations such as creating a **'centre of excellence'** and **'a network of learning support/resource teachers and staff'** (Ní Chinnéide, 2009, sct. 4.2), the development of specific Irish-medium and special educational needs training and further national, comprehensive research are absent.

Often, adequate provision for special needs is heavily dependent on budgets, and this can cause problems in Irish-medium services as they tend to be smaller in terms of population and political tensions and attitudes towards the language have also have an effect on the support granted to the sector. O'Baoill (2008, p.423) further supports the lack of guidance and planning for the future by stating that **'real research on the pedagogic, educational, linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of immersion education is relatively small'** both in formal and informal education and that strategic planning for the future is rather deficient.

I will now argue the importance of youth work services in the lives of young people.



Importance of youth work services in the lives of young people

Youth work services and provision, regardless of which language the programme is delivered through, offers and abundance of benefits to assist in the social, emotional and personal development of a young person. Youth work is described as:

“*a distinctly educational process that happens in a non-formal environment. It seeks to go beyond where young people start, to widen horizons, promote participation and invite social commitment, in particular by encouraging them to be critical and creative in their responses to their experience and the world around them.*

(National Occupational Standards, cited in Youth Work NI, 2014, p.4)

Many advantages associated with partaking in and attending youth work services include the exploration of an individual's values and beliefs, enabling young people to develop and express their voice and identity in society and supports young people in acquisition of various different skill sets and competencies to assist them in reaching their full potential (National Youth Agency, 2020).

Supplementary to the advantages alluded to above, Glór na Móna's role in providing youth work services through an alternative language helps to enhance the cultural identity and awareness of the young people who make use of their services. It is fitting to note that Glór na Móna's services have assisted and encouraged past service users to apply their learning and development in assistant roles within the Irish-language community in Belfast:

“*Teenagers and young adults from the Irish-medium education sector are now appointed to roles of leadership within the Irish-speaking community particularly in the youth work sector*

(Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta, 2018).

The shift towards incorporating and including young people with additional educational and behavioural needs within the services at Glór na Móna gives hope and paves a way for those who suffer from exclusion and marginalisation as a result of their additional needs so that they may too develop skills, express their beliefs, partake in leadership roles and find their voice in society. I now turn to examine legislation with regards to child's rights and special needs participation and voice in relation to youth work and access to services.



Identifying the Gap: A Child's Rights Based Approach

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a statement of rights which strives for the 'Protection, Provision and Participation' of children, as summarised by Verhellen (2000, p.49). The CRC is known to be the most widely supported Human Rights convention in the world as well as encompassing the largest body of legislation regarding education (Lundy 2012). The CRC notes in Article 2, the first mention of children with Special Needs in Human Rights script and with Article 23 being solely committed to children with disabilities with States Parties ensuring these children must: The committee of the CRC, however, have clearly stated that

“*enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.*”

children with Special Needs need not only be entitled to the provision of rights held by Article 23 and are entitled to full protection of all rights included in the convention. Therefore, the CRC is unique in that it has generated awareness regarding children as rights holders and preserving the dignity of children's '**civil, as well as social and political rights**' (Harcourt et. al, 2013, p.287).

Despite the progressive nature of the CRC, it is not without its limitations. The CRC operates as a globally agreed set of '**comprehensive minimum standards**' (Goldson et. al, 2006, p.96).

Possibly the most limiting factor of the CRC concerning the provision of advocacy for children with disabilities is how medical lexicon is used in Article 23 (2) and (3): '**special care**' and '**treatments**', which point to the need for rehabilitation or curing of their '**condition**'. The provision of these rights is also '**subject to availability**' and where '**financial resources**' are obtainable to meet these provisions. This is why the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is thought to both reaffirm and improve upon the articles of the CRC, especially in regard to children with additional needs.

The CRPD was adopted in 2006 and was the first Human Rights treaty of 21st century. The CRPD actively involves those affected by the convention in the drafting of the document, allowing for authentic input and consideration of the convention by disabled people, who were otherwise previously omitted from Human Rights legislation (Bruce, 2014). Using participatory methods for this study as directed by the youth led steering group has ensured the voices of young people with additional needs are included in the data transcription. We are able to draw comparisons between the CRC and CRPD, however, the latter is distinctive, as the CRPD encourages that the procurement of fundamental freedoms and

dignity of disabled people is maintained through 'age appropriate' assistance and provision in order for the individual to achieve their rights in comparison to more generic language used in the CRC regarding provision.

Bruce (2014, p.18) alludes to a '**composite life opportunity**', a way of being or doing that is '**not reducible to a particular level or mode of functioning of the body and mind**'. This is fundamental to the aims of the CRPD, especially as mentioned in Article 3 under General Principles which says that State Parties should hold '**respect for the evolving capacities of children**'. Disabled individuals, especially children, tend to be frequently hindered in their capacity to develop and make decisions for themselves, resulting in injustice and discrimination. The CRPD teaches that individuals should be given the same opportunity as their neurotypical counterparts, to grow and thrive in their own distinct way, which can be enabled by participating in youth work services.

Finally, with relation to Article 30 '**Cultural Life**', the CRPD states

“*Persons with disabilities shall be entitled, on an equal basis with others, to recognition and support of their specific cultural and linguistic identity, including sign languages and deaf culture.*”



This is of optimum importance to this study with regard to access and provision of youth work services for children with additional needs through their language of choice and further emphasises the importance of the work being carried out by Glór na Móna. Youth work services being provided through the target language of the Irish-medium sector is intrinsic to providing inclusive and culturally supportive opportunities for young people being educated in the IM sector.

I will now rationalise the methodology put forward by the youth led steering group's research design used for this study.

Methodology

Participatory Research

As highlighted in the previous scoping of literature surrounding Irish-medium Education and youth work provision in Belfast, this research aims to highlight the gaps in provision and shortcomings in practice. It is with deficient support and under-funding in mind that the following research questions were highlighted by the youth-led steering group and will be addressed in this particular study:

- 1. What impact have the services and projects provided by Glór na Móna had on children placed in the Irish-medium sector?**
- 2. Has there been any noticeable changes in the physical, social and emotional behaviours or communication abilities of service users since participating in Glór na Móna's services?**
- 3. What other services, if any, are available for service users in the surrounding area? Would service users be willing to attend these services?**
- 4. What additional facilities, resources or services would service users and guardians like to see be brought to Glór na Móna over the next four years?**

The above research questions have been composed in retaliation to the questions stated on the BLF application form as well as being informed from a prior survey regarding provision in the youth club service which was designed and carried out by the youth-led steering group at Glór na Móna. The research questions will inform the focus group and semi-structured interview questions which will form the data collection process of this report. Cohen et. al (2011) suggests that 'fitness for purpose' (p.1) is paramount when deciding on a specific research design in order to collect and compile data for a particular subject which are aligned with subject specific research questions.

This research has adopted a participatory approach in order to involve the voices of young people, their parents and other relevant stakeholders who make use of and who are affiliated with the services at Glór na Móna.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a methodical, strategic and cooperative approach to research which involves the exploration of an issue by the people the issue affects (Baum, MacDougal & Smith, 2006). PAR, further, enables marginalised groups to feel empowered, engenders the ability to assert agency and gives voice to those who are discriminated against (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2007). With the nature of the establishment of Irish-medium schools being based in socio-economically deprived areas as well as the deficit attitudes afforded to the Irish language in the education sector and society in Northern Ireland, the involvement of marginalised voices of the Irish-medium sector is crucial to highlighting the inequality faced by the sector with regards to youth work provision.

Research Sample

The research sample included service users, their guardians, relative youth work and educational stakeholders and other Irish language community members. A total of four focus group-based discussions were carried out during September 2020 on a selected night when children and their parents were asked to attend the group discussion, with Covid-19 safety measures implemented. An invitation was sent out to parents inviting themselves and their children to take part in the discussions. This was on a voluntary basis and all members were ensured that refusing to take part would carry no consequences. If participants were willing to take part, they contacted Glór na Móna staff to confirm their attendance. Two of the focus groups were carried out with the youth groups, one for Primary level students (7 Participants) and the other for Secondary level (8 Participants) students along with two separate groups of parents (The first group had 7 participants and the second group of parents had 7 participants). An interview was also carried out with members of the youth-led steering group at Glór na Móna who were central to the planning and designing of this project along with a representative of the Northern Ireland Youth Forum. Transcriptions of all data collected are available in Appendix A. Despite efforts made to contact other members of the Irish-language community and other educational stakeholders to participate in the data collection process, this research took place during the Covid-19 World Health Pandemic which created participatory barriers and safety issues with regards to data collection. All data which was collected in person was done so with the recommended precautionary measures in place in order to protect the safety of the researcher and the research participants.



Discussion of Findings

This section will describe the various research participants and groupings who took part in this research along with exploring their contributions to the research questions put to them during the data collection sessions. The discussion of data sets will be divided into two parts; youth participatory data and parental data.

Focus Group 1 (Juniors)

This focus group was made up of 7 different representatives from Irish-medium Primary level; five males and two females. This group involved participants with a range of additional educational, emotional and behavioural needs with ASD, ADHD and Aspergers included. The group were welcomed and thanked for their participation and the format of the discussion was explained. Each child was reminded that their participation was voluntary, and they could leave the discussion at any time if they did not want to continue without any negative consequences. They were also reminded that the discussion would be audio recorded for transcription purposes and would be discarded after completion of the research report. The discussion began with sharing experiences about the services at Glór na Móna and their reasons for wanting to participate in the youth club. Various reasons including wanting to socialise and meet new friends, being able to play games and watch 'YouTube videos on the big TV', making use of the sensory room and resources made available by the service and also have the

opportunity to go on trips and to the cinema were all offered. One child in particular mentioned that their mother made him attend the youth club as he did not have many friends at school, another child agreed with this statement.

The discussion moved to exploring other services in the area which the participants could avail of and what it means to be a part of the services at Glór na Móna. Only one of the male participants said that he made use of other youth services in his area, which was significantly also delivered through English. When the other participants were probed as to why they enjoy coming to the youth club they responded positively; stating that they get to learn new things in the youth club, they get to use the sensory room which helps them stay calm and feel relaxed, they discussed a sense of belonging and ownership over their particular night which they have access to the youth services which is solely for the use of children with additional needs and the participants in particular expressed their excitement of coming to Glór na Móna to see their friends and meet new people.

When discussing what the participants would like to happen in order to enhance the services at Glór na Móna over the next four years, they spoke of having new resources such as iPads to play games and watch YouTube videos on and more beanbags and soft furnishings to use whilst playing games. They spoke frequently about having a larger outdoor space in order to increase capacity for the youth club but also alluded to a 3G pitch to play games and sports on. One child spoke of having more trips organised and in particular mentioned the aquarium. Another

participant also suggested adding to the sensory aspect of the service, recommending an area where service users can go to nap when they are tired, especially coming to the youth club after school and being tired from the noise of the youth club.

Focus Group 2 (Seniors)

The second focus group was held with eight participants, (two female, six males) from the secondary level Irish-medium cohort who make use of the services at Glór na Móna. The group discussion offered an extremely positive and insightful data set and participants, resultant upon their advances in maturity and communication abilities were able to expand on their opinions and recommendations when asked questions. This group involved participants with a range of additional educational, emotional and behavioural needs with ASD, ADHD and Aspergers included. The group were welcomed and thanked for their participation and the format of the discussion was explained. Each member was reminded that their participation was voluntary, and they could leave the discussion at any time if they did not want to continue without any negative consequences. They were also reminded that the discussion would be audio recorded for transcription purposes and would be discarded after completion of the research report.

We began by discussing the current youth work services at Glór na Móna which received a very warm and positive response highlighting the benefits of having this provision for children with additional needs and especially through the medium of Irish:

'Well it's the only club of its kind specifically for people with learning difficulties and of course it's the only club where this is facilitated through the medium of Irish.'

The participants spoke of how the benefits of attending youth work services also helps them acquire skills:

'We have learnt a lot of development skills, especially being people who needed help with that sort of thing, like social skills and communication.'

Many participants made comments about the facilities and resources available including playing football, being able to have a space to meet with friends and play Playstation games and making use of the sensory room. The sensory room and the youth club were contrasted to the spaces they have at home and in school with members highlighting that they feel under less pressure to come to the youth club as they do not have to do school work :

***'We have a place like this in school but in school we do work, but here we get to develop our social skills'...
'I have lots of fun when I come here, it's different from school because we don't have to do work all the time.'***

Another participant also made reference to the sensory room as a 'special place' and explained the benefits of using it as:

'it's dark and I feel calm when I am in there. There's different lights and colours in the room and it just feels really soothing when I'm in there.'

This was supported by another member comparing the sensory room to their experience at home:

'We don't have anywhere like the sensory room at home. My bedroom is probably the closest thing. That's why I like coming here, for the space.'

The discussion also involved participants explaining the social aspects and benefits of coming to the youth club. One member said that they always feel like they speak to the same people in school and at home and that they feel happy to meet with new faces. This was further supported by the following statement:

'I feel happy coming to the Cumann to get away from my family and my house for a while.'

All members supported the idea of having a particular social space outside of their family homes where they can meet with and speak to new people and peers.

When speaking about the other youth club facilities available for the members in their local areas, the older cohort of participants seemed to have more access to and attendance at other clubs and services than that of the younger participants. Many participants made contrasting remarks about other youth services, particularly in relation to language:

'It's a lot different than coming to Glór na Móna. I like coming here to use Irish as it is my first language... We like coming here because we speak Irish and other people understand us.'

Only one participant made reference to another club which was a Bodhrán class which was also delivered through the medium of Irish. Some of the participants, however, stated that they do not attend any other activities or clubs outside of Glór na Móna. One participant said they struggled to make friends in school and therefore did not want to go out outside of school. They said that they liked coming to the services at Glór na Móna because of the smaller number of members who attend the youth club, yet after attending the services at Glór na Móna they were able to make friends and be sociable. Another participant also said that they believe the staff are like friends to them and that they treat them with respect at the youth club at Glór na Móna.

The discussion moved to recommendations being made in order to enhance the services at Glór na Móna over the next four years. One participant made a contemporary remark stating that they

'want to get rid of Covid so that it doesn't mean the Cumann will be closed down again.'

A number of recommendations were made with regards to facilities and resources such as more gaming consoles and a development of both inside and outside space to include a new football pitch. Another individual stated that they would like to see more members be introduced to the service so that they could make more friends. A few of the participants made recommendations to include more trips as part of the service. One of the focus group members also made comment that they enjoy just coming to the youth club to stay up for an extra two hours on a school night.

Particular reference was made to developing discussion and perhaps training with regards to potential career paths and opportunities for the members, especially those who are nearing towards making choices for GCSE subjects and A-levels:

'Maybe it would be good just to talk about choices and getting help to make the right choices for GCSE subjects and stuff.'

One participant also made a recommendation that they would like to develop some cookery skills and added that courses or training to help their development would be beneficial.

Focus Group 3 (Youth-led Steering Group Members)

This discussion involved two members of the Youth-led Steering Group who were central to the design of this research report and forming the research questions. They thought it was important to reflect on their own experiences being part of the Glór na Móna community and how their participation in the service has helped with their own personal and professional development.

When asked about the impact which the services at Glór na Móna have had on their development, both members spoke very positively in support of the work the youth club has done for its services users. Both participants attended the club ever since they began secondary school. They both spoke of the confidence coming to youth club has given to them, especially in relation

to milestones such as interviews for jobs and progressing on to university. Both participants also alluded to the linguistic aspect of attending services through the Irish-medium; that they felt a sense of ownership and belonging as part of the Glór na Móna Community which sets them apart from other youth services across Belfast.

Both participants have had numerous opportunities to volunteer with the youth club showing their maturity, development and reliability to the staff at Glór na Móna who have afforded them with such opportunities throughout their time as members of the club. Growing up within the service, the participants were also able to highlight shortcomings in provision and make recommendations for further development, particularly in relation to those with additional needs. They emphasised the importance of this service and the benefits it offers to children with learning difficulties, particularly those who wish to avail of services through the medium of Irish and that much more research and funding is required in order to make adequate provision for this service.

Parent Focus Group 1 (Juniors)

A focus group discussion was held with the parents of the junior focus group participants. There were seven participants in this group, all of which were female members. They group were thanked for their participation, reminded that participation was voluntary and that the discussion would be audio recorded for the purposes of data transcription and would be deleted after this

process was complete.

The discussion opened with a question on how the services at Glór na Móna have had an impact on their children. The majority of participants spoke of how the service has made their children gain confidence and the ability to make friends and form relationships with their peers as a result of the additional needs focused dynamic of the services at Glór na Móna:

'My child's confidence has grown an awful lot, he has made friends, I didn't think he would make friends in this sort of setting, you know, he only has one friend in school, but he has made so many friends here he is even asking about coming here, whereas with other activities and club I wouldn't really get that from him, in a formal setting especially.'

'For my son, he went to the non-special needs specific Irish-medium youth club in West Belfast, he was there one week, he saw a spider, refused to go back, he has a terrible phobia of spiders, and whenever I said to him about coming here, he was so happy...he wouldn't have a lot of close personal friends. Whereas here, he does, he can tell if someone else has special needs straight off and he will just automatically go for that child, it doesn't matter if it's ADHD, autism, doesn't matter what it is, as opposed to those with no needs.'

The participants spoke highly of how the youth club at Glór na Móna has helped them repair relationships with peers they previously did not get along with in school but also to be

independent from peers they would be friendly with in school by encouraging them to forge new relationships with children from other schools in the area as well.

Parents also spoke of the detrimental effect the Coronavirus pandemic lockdown had on their children with the closure of youth club facilities and not being able to see their friends and have their social outlet on a weekly basis since March 2020, despite efforts to move services online which was also commended by the focus group.

'My daughter has struggled, she has struggled all along and she actually had to go to school during the whole of Lockdown as myself and my husband both work in the Trust, and it was a massive struggle, her emotions were up and down.. So this cumann is just normal for her, she needs normal. I often hear, 'no-one wants to talk to me in class, nobody wants to sit beside me' and then there's stories from the cumann she says 'someone came over and spoke to me'.

A lot of discussion centred around comparing their children's experiences in school and provision they receive through youth work services. Mixed reviews of provision received for their children in relation to school were mentioned, some praising the work being done:

'Our school is actually implementing specialist help through an autism specific centre coming in to support them as they have such a high percentage of children with special educational needs coming through their school, that needs to be brought into all schools.'

'Anyone else who I talk to, parents from English-medium schools and the rest of it, you know they are fighting whereas my child's school is really doing all they can, through their own budget to support her.'

and others saying that more support needs to be offered, especially with regards to acceptance and inclusion:

'special needs to be talked about more, I don't know whether in school assemblies or not but other children come off with statements such as 'you're weird' you're being stupid' this needs to be tackled'.

One parent in particular referred to their child who was withdrawn from Irish-medium education after being told that their child should not have been placed in a mainstream, bilingual setting. This was on top of deficient support in place with a lack of one to one specific additional needs support for the child which was resultant upon a delayed statementing process. This parent in particular recommended that an Irish-medium specific special needs school needs to be established in the sector as she felt her child was missing out on the opportunity to learn through the medium of Irish.

The discussion moved to speaking about how the use of Irish in the youth club has had an impact on their child. The majority of the participants spoke very positively of how the language has influenced their children's speech and communication abilities:

'I actually found that from my child coming here his speech and actually being able to hear what he was saying became so much clearer. I think that is because my child is in a setting where other people do not judge him, for his language, his behaviour, whereas there is that judgement in school, when he is here he has that confidence, and his speech has got a lot better.'

A few parents, however, did raise the issue that their children will simply not speak Irish when they come to the youth club. They affirmed that their children have no issues with understanding and comprehending the language, one parent explained that they think it is based on a processing matter to do with their child's condition and speaking the language causes them to be overwhelmed. They said the same issue arises in school, yet the children feel much more pressure to speak Irish in school, in the club they are encouraged and spoke to through the medium of Irish but tend not to be penalised for not using the language. This was also substantiated by praise granted to the Glór na Móna staff; the parents spoke of the exceptionally respectful and caring demeanour the youth club staff share with the young people and how they help to empower the service users.

With regards to other youth club services within the local area the majority of the parents said that they do not send their child, or their children do not want to go to other activities or clubs. One parent said their child attends a youth club close to where the child lives in another area of the city but they stated their child seems to be much more comfortable at the services at Glór na Móna as they are not surrounded by other children who also go

to the child's school and are able to be themselves. Most parents spoke of deficient provision for children with additional needs with regards to youth work explaining that their needs are not understood and therefore cannot be met by other services. They also again highlighted the benefits of having the provision through the medium of Irish:

'The children know they are surrounded by other children who are the same as them, plus they are continuing on their Irish, so they are learning that, and more, and that's what is actually so good about it. Because they're getting the Irish interaction.'

The group discussed what they would like to see added to the services at Glór na Móna in order to enhance their children's experiences of coming to the youth club. Recommendations such as regular and relevant training for staff in order to help continue to deal with the complex needs of the children and more trips to be added to the programme were made. A parent raised a concern about their child with regards to weight gain, in particular during the Covid-19 lockdown with having the club closed and therefore recommended to incorporate some form of physical activity in the programme or to raise awareness of pursuing a healthy lifestyle. In addition to this, parents made recommendations for an extra night during the week of the service to be added to the programme as it would enhance their children's social skills even further.

Parent Focus Group 2 (Seniors)

The final focus group held during the data collection process was with the parents of senior service users. This focus group was made up of eight participants (two males and six females). Like all focus group sessions, the participants were reminded that participation in the focus group discussion was voluntary and they could withdraw from the discussion at any time without any negative consequences. Participants were also reminded that the discussion would be audio recorded for transcription purposes and would be discarded once the data collection process of the research was complete.

The discussion commenced with dialogue centring around the impact the services at Glór na Móna have had on their children. Developing young people's confidence was mentioned as one of the key aspects of why the service at Glór na Móna has proven a success for the service users with parents also alluding to the youth club providing a necessary social outlet for their children.

'My son literally had no friends, he went to school and all but he definitely didn't socialise with anybody and it was a big thing for him 'I have no friends, I have no friends' but he comes straight into here tonight and starts talking to others straight away. You know, he's walking in taller, he has confidence coming in and it's almost as if this is his space where he can be himself.'

Parents gave insight into how the service has been essential in building relationships with their peers and allowing their children to make friends with others.

The effects of the Coronavirus lockdown situation were also discussed by parents, with the majority of them stating that anxieties have been heightened amongst the young people being away from their peers and not having the opportunity to meet up with peers and family. They did, however, mention that the remote summer programmes and activities planned online by the club were a great success in helping their children keep in contact. One parent also mentioned that activities planned online for service users enabled her child to take on the role of the educator and allowed them to teach her how to make pancakes, helping him to gain independence:

'you know that was stuff that was so important for their own independence because eventually I would love for my child to live on his own and have a life like that. So him being in charge and actually being able to teach me and encouraging other people in the group to get involved too. I saw a really different side to him.'

With regards to other services in the service users' local areas which are available for young people, parents expressed the difficulties in encouraging young people with additional needs to attend other services which may not specifically cater to their individual needs. Parents also expressed that the familiarity of Glór na Móna staff between working in local schools but also speaking the language has helped to make their children feel at ease and attracts the young people to the service. One parent in particular

alluded to the benefits of having the service delivered through the medium of Irish which helps to create a sense of belonging for their child:

'it was something to do with the language that made him feel like part of the community, that he fitted in there, so I definitely think a service through the Irish medium is beneficial for them.'

The discussion moved to recommending further steps for implementation for the service in order to improve and enhance the experiences of service users over the next four years. One parent raised an issue with regards to creating an awareness and possibly providing training on the transitioning to adolescence for young people with additional needs and perhaps discussing relationships and emotional/sexual health.

'my son is turning into a man, whereas he doesn't necessarily understand all the changes that are coming with puberty and we just assume that they are young people with autism who aren't interested in relationships or that they aren't taking in stuff that's going on with their bodies. But he is definitely not open to talk about either because as soon as I mention anything at all he just switches off, so you know, maybe just having those conversations with them, especially amongst their peers is essential. And there really is so much change going on.'

Another parent suggested for some form of physical activity to be introduced to the programme for service user as they would like to see their child learn about healthy habits and how to make better choices. This was supported by other parents stating that they would love to see their child take up physical activity rather than being stationary and playing computer games or watching TV in their spare time. They stressed the need to make sports fun and attractive for children with additional needs who may not be overly proficient in a sport and to make sport and physical activity less competitive as it is in school:

'We need to disregard competition and make it more about achieving a healthy and physical lifestyle and the importance of that. I don't think they are getting that time or attention.'

The parents also made the suggestion to extend the youth club provision over an extra night during the week in order to increase the capability for social exposure and interaction for the young people. This was agreed upon by other representatives of the group, however, one parent did suggest that a trusted transportation service would be useful as there are parents who are unable to drive making use of the service for their children and having to travel from different parts of the city in order to access the service as it is the only youth club which provides for additional needs through the Irish-medium. This recommendation was supported by other members of the group and also suggested that it may increase the enrolment of service users attending the youth club. A parent representative made a closing statement,

saying that

'my son felt a responsibility to come here tonight, he loves this place and he felt like he needed to come here to support it and try and make it better for him and his friends.'

This was supported by the other parents in the group who commended the staff on their work and creating a safe environment for service users to be a part of a socialise but also create a safe space for parents knowing that their children will be cared for during their time at Glór na Móna.

NI Youth Forum Representative

The youth-led steering group thought it would be important to include discussion and data from a member of the NI Youth Forum who would be able to make comments regarding rights and youth provision for special needs in youth work services in Northern Ireland. The deputy director of the NI Youth Forum was contacted for an interview. The representative interviewed has over 20 years of experience between teaching, youth work, and working with youth led projects in the sector.

The participant gave great insight into the past and current state of Irish-medium youth work, stating that the sector is particularly young in comparison to that of the English-medium sector: ' So then we have the Irish medium provision coming in, which again would only be a provision of about 10 years of experience, and is still trying to find its way in terms of development of practise, its

staff, qualifications, and all those things that come with it. Where historically, Irish-medium youth work provision was simply not on the table, with regards to rights and also without no supporting Irish language legislation, there's nothing enshrined in legislation for rights protection.' The participant also made reference to the community based origins of the Irish-medium sector and had an appreciation for the contextual background of the Irish-medium sector as a whole:

'They [Glór na Móna] have laid the foundations down for Irish-medium youth work provision and it is a relatively new organisation in terms of a history of youth work.'

The participant also spoke at length with regards to gaps in provision for youth work and particularly for those with additional needs:

'Gaps in provision, gaps in services, not having enough qualified staff, being able to access psychologists, again, these gaps stretch over all sectors of education, not just exclusive to the Irish-medium sector.'

Particular reference was given to the sectoral socio-economic demographic of the Irish-medium sector especially with regards to disadvantaged areas and the need for appropriate youth work services for young people:

'The history of youth work is about building relationships for kids who probably come from a disadvantaged, marginalised background. So, we've got that with the Irish-medium sector and also with the language at times being

used as a political weapon. All this doesn't serve purpose for a young child whose first language is Irish and is entitled to have both a formal and informal education. And that is without even mentioning children who have additional needs and speak Irish.'

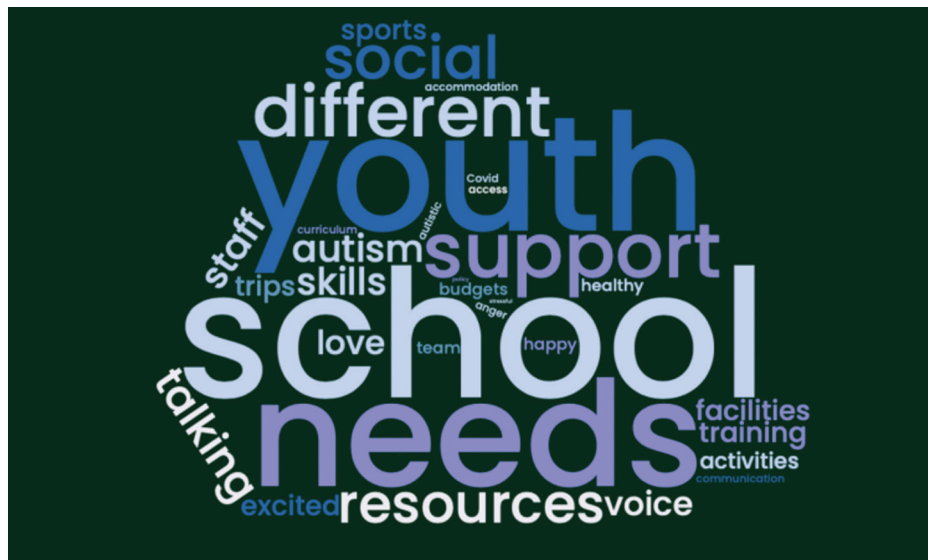
They alluded to a lack of funding being of particular importance when discussing deficiencies in youth work services:

'The thing is funding. Long term sustained funding approached for the informal sector, is just not there... We can see how children's language rights are at risk. We are talking about gaps in provision here. We are talking about children here with additional needs also and about discrimination. But it all comes down to budgets. Glór na Móna, being linked with the Irish-medium sector, have had to fight tooth and nail to get support'

The participant stated that going forward, there is a particular gap which is negligent for service users who bridge the gap between youth services and young adulthood and requires attention and financing. They also recommended that the Irish-medium youth work service needs to 'link up' with key organisations who specialise in children's rights and hold their values in high esteem so that advocacy and lobbying for enhanced youth work provision through the medium of Irish involves a rights-based approach on a national and international platform.

Analysis of Findings

After transcribing each data set and providing a description of the focus group and interview discussions, the data collected was collated through a word cloud data base which highlighted the main themes and key words of the data transcription. The word cloud of the data transcribed can be seen below:



The above themes were commonly highlighted in discussion with different research participants in response to the research questions highlighted below:

1. What impact have the services and projects provided by Glór na Móna had on children placed in the Irish-medium sector?

2. Has there been any noticeable changes in the physical, social and emotional behaviours or communication abilities of service users since participating in Glór na Móna's services?

3. What other services, if any, are available for service users in the surrounding area? Would service users be willing to attend these services?

4. What additional facilities, resources or services would service users and guardians like to see be brought to Glór na Móna over the next four years?

The findings would suggest that the services at Glór na Móna have had a profound impact on service users and their families ever since the establishment of the needs specific Irish-medium youth club service. Both service users and their parents have expressed astounding praise and positive commentary on the benefits of the service which promotes personal and social development of young people with additional needs. The service has created a normalised, safe and encouraging space for young people who otherwise would have struggled to forge

relationships and who would struggle to engage with others in a social youth setting which did not primarily focus on supporting young people with additional needs. The supplementary linguistic aspect to the service has also proven an asset to the youth club with both service users and their parents praising and supporting the use of Irish language in communicating and delivering the programme. The use of Irish within the service has helped to create a communal sense of ownership and belonging for the young people which in turn encourages them to embrace their own cultural identity attached to language use. The club has also had a significant impact on young people who have grown up through the service and have had the capacity to volunteer and work within the service itself; creating opportunities to show leadership skills and co-operation with other staff members proving beneficial for the employability capacity of these service users also.

Parents in particular spoke of how the youth club service encouraged young people to develop their confidence, social awareness and communication skills and ability to form relationships. Parents in particular were able to see the detrimental effect the absence of the youth club service had on young people due to its temporary service withdrawal during the Coronavirus pandemic lockdown and how the reopening of the service was a source of great excitement and hope for the young people. Service users and parents expressed a lack of other viable youth club services for the young people with additional needs and especially those without an Irish language focus for young people across the city. Parents and young people alike seemed

reluctant to attend other services where attention and support for additional needs was not seen as a core value of the youth service. The Irish language aspect of the club also seemed an attractive factor to participation from both service users and parents as well.

With regards to additional facilities, resources and recommendations made by parents and service users being added to the youth club in order to enhance provision and the experiences of young people within the service, a number of suggestions were made which need to be addressed with the assistance of funding from the Big Lottery Fund project. Suggestions varied from bringing in more electronic devices to additional trips and expansion of youth club accommodation which were all deemed important in order to improve the service. The addition of physical activities to the youth work programme in order to promote healthy lifestyles and wellbeing was mentioned by multiple participants as well as the suggestion to provide opportunities for workshops and discussions around young people's sexual and emotional wellbeing, particularly relating to those who have additional needs. It was also recommended that the programme introduces training and opportunities to explore different career and vocational pathways for the service users and the promotion and acquisition of life skills and independent living such as cookery lessons.

The above recommendations will be brought to the attention of the youth-led and expert steering groups as well as Glór na Móna authorities in order to inform the action planned for and taken over the next four years of provision and beyond.

Limitations of the study and opportunities for further research

Similar to all research, I have acknowledged that the following limitations have presented as a result of this study:

- **This research took place during a world health pandemic which made for restrictions with regards to data collection and constraints on sample size.**
- **The research was carried out during a limited time scale and had a deadline in place.**
- **The sample size could be considered small and a larger sample size would have added validity and material to the data.**
- **A larger number of stakeholders could have been contacted if the time scale for data collection could have been extended.**
- **The Coronavirus pandemic made data collection feasibility rather challenging with regards to safety measures and social contact.**

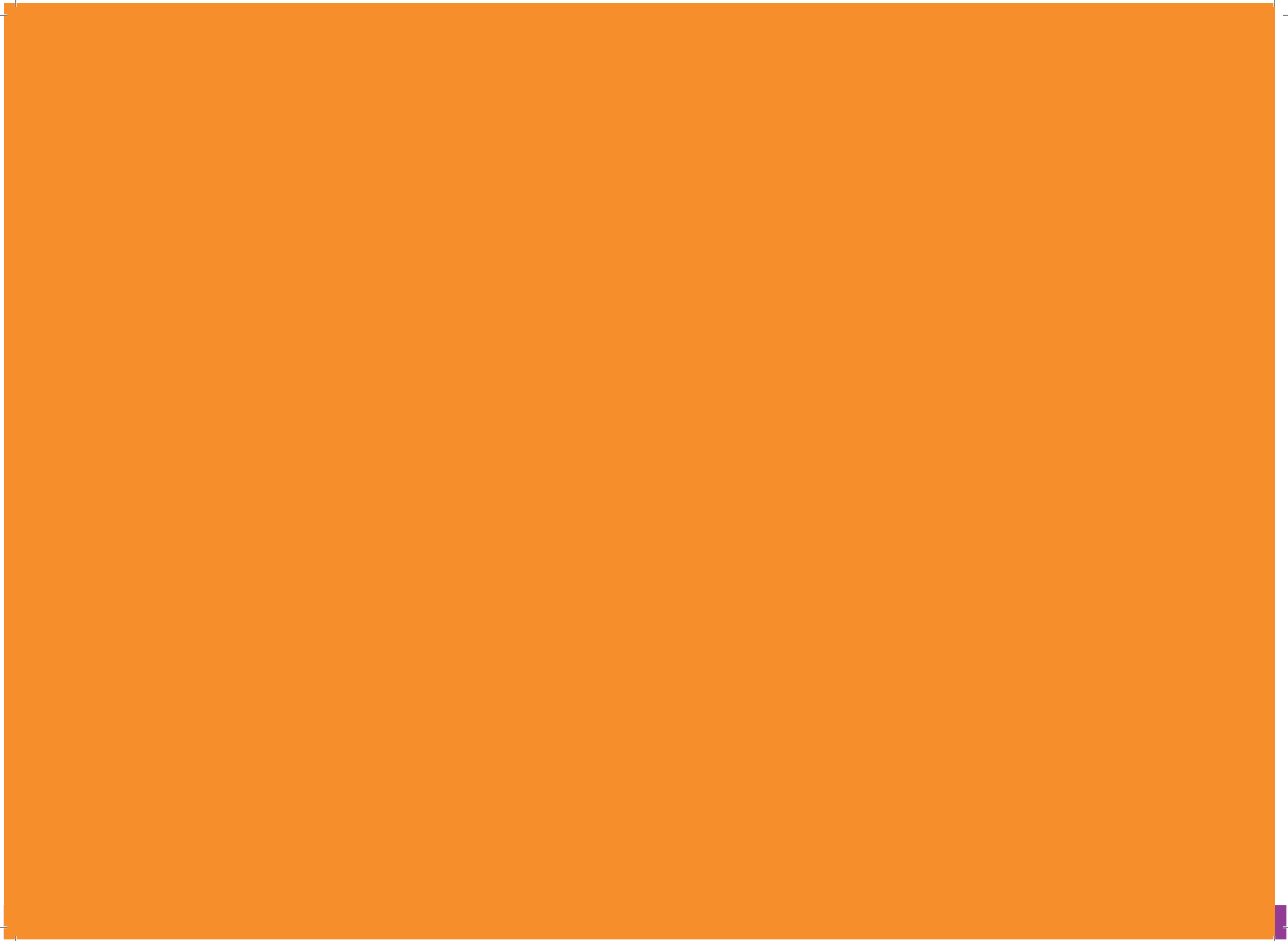
I also acknowledge that there are further opportunities for study as a result of the findings of this research report and would definitely consider exploring this topic in the future.



Conclusions

This research report has explored and examined the youth work services for young people with additional needs in the Irish-medium Education sector in Belfast. Despite proving an extremely young sector of education in Northern Ireland, youth work relating to Irish-medium proves an even younger and undeveloped area of youth work still and requires much more in depth research and exploration in order to provide an inclusive, far-reaching and adequate service for young people of the Irish-medium sector. The service at Glór na Móna has pioneered a way for young people with additional needs to access informal education, social contact and invaluable life and personal skill acquisition through the medium of Irish. This service is a completely unique social, cultural and educational outlet for young people of the Irish-medium sector who otherwise would have no such opportunity to obtain the same experience through other youth service programmes which do not have the additional needs of service users at the centre of its core values. Youth work services delivered through the Irish-medium are therefore in dire need of development along with financial and statutory support so that young people placed in the Irish-medium sector do not experience exclusion or discrimination as a result of deficient informal, language-specific education opportunities.





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Appendices

Appendix A

NI Youth Forum

In relation to a children's rights approach to youth work services, in which way are children's rights possibly compromised in the surrounding area?

Well I suppose when you think about it, the UNCRC, And you think specifically around those 42 rights that children and young people have, the right to have a language the right to have an identity, And probably one of the most important articles in the convention is article 12, So it's not only about having a voice it's about being listened to and adults listening to young people. So if you think about GnaMóna for example, within the Irish medium sector, in Belfast, they have laid the foundations down for Irish-medium youth work provision And it is a relatively new organisation In terms of a history of youth work. Youth work here, itself, as an entity, Is not that old either. As a result of the Conflict as you know, From the late 1960s right through to the 90s the whole idea of youth work then was about building relationships. But during that time weren't building their relationships, they were too focused on taking part in a war etc, So youth work took a bit of a pause. So really, youth work here really began to kick off in the 1990s. It is still only 30 years old of a sector, in comparison to social work, which is hundreds of years old, or other settings, including formal education. Youth work isn't that old in comparison. So then we have the Irish medium provision coming in, which again would only be a provision of about 10 years of experience, and is still trying to find its way in

terms of development of practise, its staff, qualifications, and all those things that come with it. Where historically, Irish-medium youth work provision was simply not on the table, with regards to rights and also without no supporting Irish language legislation, there's nothing enshrined in legislation for rights protection. Unless we get to a stage where in the likes of Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, these sorts of countries, which are very proactive with regards to including the UNCRC in their rights legislation, and further strengthening the right to have languages, education etc for children. When we look back at the concluding observations of 2016, we can see how children's language rights are at risk. We are talking about gaps in provision here. We are talking about children here with additional needs also and about discrimination. But it all comes down to budgets. Glór na Móna, being linked with the Irish-medium sector, have had to fight tooth and nail to get support from the Education Authority's budget, so for starters, IM provision is going to be a long way down the pecking order for support in terms of core funding for the organisation, and this is the informal side of things not even formal schooling yet. So children's rights are not enshrined in legislation here, there's nothing here to hold their rights accountable. Our organisation will return to Geneva in 2022. We have continued to ask questions about Irish language rights, and now we have seen a bit of shift in relation to that, but it also really shows you how long processes like this take. And how detrimental the process is when the services aren't there. Gaps in provision, gaps in services, not having enough qualified staff, being able to access psychologists, again, these gaps stretch over all sectors of education, not just exclusive to the Irish-medium sector. The curriculum comes first in the governments eyes, it's about kids in seats, get them through, high retention levels, these are the sort of things that aren't going to cut school budgets, but then, how are the schools meeting the needs of the children? And that's why I think there needs to be

educational reform, in the sense of it is purely based on academic success, and not so much about the learning styles of children. If the budgets are being cut, in the English-medium sector, then take the case of a much younger sector of education which has just come on the scene in the last 60 years. Look at the history of Irish-medium education here, it just didn't exist pre-conflict, then the rebirth and the reclamation of the Irish language occurred in West Belfast and again they had to fight tooth and nail for recognition by DE. And it is still a very new sector in my eyes. Then you have the informal which is youth work, the sector is only ten years old. From having budgets ripped away to slowly building up its workforce with newly qualified staff, and then we get into identifying gaps, the Irish language sector has been left far far behind. For example, there are very very few education psychologists who have Irish as a language through which they can communicate with pupils. Automatically the children are getting their right to communicate through their language taken away from them. The skills just aren't there. So I think that's how children's rights are being affected.

Do you think the added tensions surrounding the Irish language have an impact on access to youth work services?

100%, there's loads of things at play here. Our organisation, who works together with the Irish-language youth work sector, are at wish with our funding. The thing is funding. Long term sustained funding approached for the informal sector, is just not there. And it's not there unless you fit the mould of the EA's full time youth work provision, there's a regional youth development program for that, and that filters down into a local development plan with a vision of long term strategies and the funding that goes along with it. The thing that has made a big impact has been priorities for youth, and priorities for youth kicked in around 2010 which was

a consultation process which influenced the voluntary sector now being controlled by the education authority. So they control everything, they control the funding, and that comes down from the DE. There used to be a thing called the youth council for Northern Ireland and it was there to purely make sure that regional organisations in the voluntary sector sort of had a bit of a safe guard around funding, which was wiped out.

The other thing with priorities for youth, it neglects the age group of 18+, and very much so is moving towards a more targeted provision. The history of youth work is about building relationships for kids who probably come from a disadvantaged, marginalised background. So we've got that with the Irish-medium sector and also with the language at times being used as a political weapon. All this doesn't serve purpose for a young child whose first language is Irish, and is entitled to have both a formal and informal education. And that is without even mentioning children who have additional needs and speak Irish. There must be, there has to be gaps in provision, so their rights, they are all over the place. You could literally quote so many rights, Article 12, Article 21, and then to add disability on top of that, and what the recommendations are coming from the convention, if it's not enshrined in legislation then these children have no protection.

What needs to be done over the next 4 years to ensure the rights of the child are met?

So what I think needs to happen is that the IM youth work provision need to link up with organisations who have children's rights at their core. So like NICCY, and the Children's Commissioner, we want to start having conversations with them, their job is to advocate on the behalf of young people from a rights based perspective. We need to start talking about and using our voice. And the NIYF's job is to promote the voice of young people. We also need to

start looking inwards as well, and ask what vehicle is the voice for young people? It needs to be in partnership with other sectors and EM speaking organisations. Any politicisation needs to be removed. Because those other organisation have access to power. And how do we use our voice to reach out to other stakeholders. And then, take it to the next level and reach out to maybe, the United Nations. Why shouldn't Irish -medium representatives be included in the next concluding observations? Both regarding IM informal and formal education. So what we need to do is get to the power players, and they will be the ones who will take our voice forward. We need to do it locally, nationally but also internationally.

Focus Group with Youth-Led Steering Group Representatives

Give an insight on your experience with Glór na Móna and how you were made aware of their services

C- I was made aware of Glór na Móna first of all in Primary school and attended clubs, but it wasn't until secondary school that I would have really gotten involved with them and their services due to having friends, over in the West, who were always attending the club nights.

After that of course they recruited me to be a volunteer with helping to organise festivals like Féile na Carraige, and then volunteering in the club as a youth leader in the club in North Belfast when it was established.

A- I've been working as a youth leader for almost 4 years now in an Irish-medium specific youth work provision in North Belfast. I've been involved with Irish-medium youth work from the age of 5 when I first joined the youth club situated in North Belfast, it wasn't

until I reached secondary school that I became aware of the services that Glór na Móna provided, across West Belfast as I am from the North of the city. At the age of 13 I was invited by friends from school to attend Glór na Móna, they were taking an OCN level 1 course, throughout this I would have volunteered at many of their events, and then became a member of the team.

In what way has the service at Glór na Móna benefited you in your development as a young adult?

A- Glór na Móna has played a massive role in my development, particularly in terms of confidence, because of the connection to the Irish language there's a sense of ownership with the clubs that the young people feel which makes us stand out from the English youth clubs across the city, in my opinion.

Being older, and now being a part of the organisation as a youth worker and a member of the team, I've identified a gap in resources for children with special needs and therefore further funding is needed so that our young people are given the same chance to make the most of the services which are provided for them. In my opinion it's also majorly important that the members of our team are given the appropriate training to ensure that these young people have a positive experience across our clubs, and to encourage them to continue attending so they gain the same benefits that a child from a generic youth work service would.

B- It has definitely helped me gain a lot more confidence with things like getting a part time job and getting in to university, if Glór na Móna recognise the potential in you then they really try to encourage you and bring that out as you go further with any path you choose and they try to involve you in the life of the cumann. Especially education wise, they always make an effort to support

what you do, whilst taking that pressure off you when you're in the club as they realise it's out of school hours and you also need time to relax and kick back.

Would any further services have helped your development during your time attending the service?

A- I wouldn't say I could have availed of any other services tailored specifically to me but there are of course resources and areas which Glór na Móna are lacking in which I've seen more clearly since working as a volunteer and a leader, specifically in relation to SEN children and particularly those children who are on the autistic spectrum.

B- I agree, we were lucky as we were given so many opportunities for development and to attend courses that we could add to our CVs like OCNs and first aid courses, but there is a massive lack of resources for special needs in the Irish-medium sector as a whole.

A- There's a huge gap in resources there and something as small as a sensory room for kids who may be susceptible to 'meltdowns' would make a great difference, not to mention, other methods that might help to tackle the challenges that a child on the spectrum may face in a busy youth club.

Would you like to see any services/provision added to the youth club over the next 4 years?

B- It would be great to see something like the sensory room I mentioned before or specific additional needs resources provided through enhanced funding over the next 4 years and of course more in depth training for all leaders across the board to help us deal with the wide range of additional needs of children who we see coming through our doors.

A- Autism can be a very isolating condition along with all the

other additional needs we see in our young people who attend our services so it's important these children know they have a safe space, where their specific needs and requirements can be catered for, this will help them feel valued and included, we need development through resources and training so that we have further enhance the experiences of these children.

Focus group 1 – Juniors

What have you all learnt from coming here and why do you enjoy coming here every Monday night?

- To socialise, and to meet with new people
- I like to come and play games and watch youtube videos on the big TV.
- My mum made me because I didn't have many friends at school.
- Mine too. To meet new people.
- I also like coming here to use the sensory room and to go to the park and everything else that we do here.
- We get to go on trips and go to the movies.

On other nights during the week, do you participate in any other clubs?

- I go to the choir in school.
- I play peil gaelach.
- I've started to play basketball, well I started but then I quit it.

Are there any differences between attending other clubs and groups and coming to the services at Glór na Móna?

- We all do different things here, we learn new things
- Everyone else gets to come to the cumann on different nights, but Monday night is our night
- We get to use the sensory room when we are here, it helps us to calm down
- Yeah we feel relaxed when we get to use it

Are there other clubs in your area? What is special about coming to Glór na Móna?

- You feel happy meeting other people
- I feel so excited coming here, I get to see my friends

What is the difference between being at school and coming to Glór na Móna?

- No one else in my school has autism. No one else in my class has it. When I come to the cumann I meet people like me.
- I feel a little bit nervous at school, I am the only one who is autistic in my class.
- I feel more comfortable coming to the cumann.
- In here is way more fun than school, school is boring. And it is very bossy.
- Everytime we come in to the cumann we are asked how we feel, we don't get that in school

Is there anything you would like to see added to the services at Glór na Móna in the next 4 years?

- New stuff, like maybe new space as well, we could have more space and make the cumann bigger
- A 3G pitch to play football on
- More iPads that we can go on to play games and watch youtube videos
- Plan more trips like go to the aquarium
- Somewhere to go to sleep, or to nap when I'm tired, sometimes I get tired from all the noise and coming here after school
- Some stuff like beanbags so we can sit and play playstation, and board games and puzzles.

Parents Group 1

Thank you everyone for joining me to have this focus group discussion. I am just going to open the conversation and ask firstly what impact the services here at Glór na Móna have had on your child?

- My child's confidence has grown an awful lot, he has made friends, I didn't think he would make friends in this sort of setting, you know, he only has one friend in school, but he has made so many friends here and you know, he is even asking about coming here, whereas with other activities and club I wouldn't really get that from him, in a formal setting especially. In the other youth clubs you know he is running about mad and the other kids can't be annoyed with him, whereas the programme is more focused here.
- My wee boy is the same, even all during the summer and everything, with lockdown, he loved the virtual activities but whenever the bingo started he had a meltdown because it was

too loud for him, all the other kids were just so excited to see each other. But he loves it like, and I think he needs it as well because their classes are so small in school so they don't really have a big setting and there's like I mean about 8 people in his class just, so there's not a big range and because of all this going on with Coronavirus it's harder for them to get out and play and stuff now so coming back here, it's going to be a hell of a lot better for them.

- For my son, he went to the non-special needs specific Irish-medium youth club in West Belfast, he was there one week, he saw a spider, refused to go back, he has a terrible phobia of spiders, and whenever I said to him about coming here, he was so happy. He's one of about 20 in his class so it is a proper mainstream Bunscoil, and the only good thing about his class is that the other kids are all a bit more aware so they're a bit happier with him, but at the same time, he wouldn't have a lot of close personal friends. Whereas here, he does, he can tell if someone else has special needs straight off and he will just automatically go for that child, it doesn't matter if it's ADHD, autism, doesn't matter what it is, as opposed to those with no needs.

- They have this little sensory probe, my child is in the same school, and others seems to find it hard to understand as to my my son is always going mad and bouncing around whereas here, everyone is doing the same thing, and it's normalised.

- And they don't be afraid of telling eachother off.

- As great as my child's school is, and they have been amazing, and as great as his class is, you always still worry as a parent about phone calls, day in day out, but there has never been that here.

- My son came to me and said 'mummy I have no friends in school' and I said what do you mean you have no friends?, and

he said that the other children were saying that he was too loud and I'm screaming in their ears, but he's a sensory thing where he impersonates a bus, or a Glider, so he's constantly, his hands are his window wipers, just everything, he does a big loud screech because that's his engines going, and other kids don't understand that this is the way he stims and he is constantly doing it, and even in the house at night, but he's thinking the other kids don't like him because of it. He's getting left out in the play yard, he just runs around by himself, he's being left, and he's feeling it. Whereas here, he just feels so much more comfortable.

- My daughter has struggled, she has struggled all along and she actually had to go to school during the whole of Lockdown as myself and my husband both work in the Trust, and it was a massive struggle, her emotions were up and down, just really really bad. And when I saw the message about the cumann being able to return, oh she has just been so excited. She's P7 now so she'll be going to big school next year, and I feel like I have to let go of the reigns a little bit, even though it's so hard to do. And when we got the message about definitely starting back on 'this date' I said oh God, please don't say that, because if this doesn't open, then she would have had a total meltdown. She would have been crying, had a temper, asking why is his happening to me and, my preparation for my daughter is the day we are doing something, we're doing it. And now with society shutting down again, my mum is also shielding, I also said to my son who also has autism, 'you're not going to see granny now' and then I got hit with 'why can't we see granny, why can't we do this, why can't we do that' but I have to try and explain that we are trying to look after them by staying away. So this cumann is just normal for her, she needs normal. I often here, 'noone wants to talk to me in class, nobody wants to sit beside me' and then there's stories from the cumann she says 'someone came over and spoke to me'.

- It's a lot harder now for them to get the interaction in school than it was before with the Covid restrictions, especially girls, as girls are emotional and affectionate, and it's just not allowed.

- I think as well though, special needs to be talked about more, I don't know whether in school assemblies or not but other children come off with statements such as 'you're weird' you're being stupid', this needs to be tackled.

- Our school is actually implementing specialist help through an autism specific centre coming in to support them as they have such a high percentage of children with special educational needs coming through their school, that needs to be brought in to all schools.

- Anyone else who I talk to, parents from English-medium schools and the rest of it, you know they are fighting whereas my child's school is really doing all they can, through their own budget to support her.

- The problem isn't necessarily the schools. The problem mainly comes from the Education Authority, it comes from a lack of understanding at a higher level. Now there are schools that I've heard of in Belfast who don't want SEN children on their registers. Now it doesn't matter how bad that child is or how much that child needs their help, they won't do it. That's what I've found.

- My son isn't actually in Irish-medium provision anymore, he was removed from the IM stream, he was placed into an English-mainstream, and as you probably know where the English-medium school is situated, quite a loyalist area. The EA just wouldn't listen, from nursery to Rang 1 we were told 'he should have never been put into a mainstream school' and they also

wouldn't give him a one to one assistant, he is 6 but he has the mind of a 2 year old. They wouldn't provide any help unless he was statemented or moved to a special needs school and all the other hoops you have to jump through. Why can't there be an SEN IM school? Now my child is missing out on learning through the medium of Irish, because there's no back up, there's no provision. Our kids are really missing out.

Have you noticed differences in physical or social behaviour or communication abilities in your child since they started coming to Glór na Móna?

- Yes my child seems a lot more outgoing now, he was having trouble with another boy in his school, just really clashing, another child who also had special needs, the teacher told me that because both of them have different additional needs, that they'll never be friends, but then they came here, and they're the best of friends. They made up, they were both sat down and spoken to and then after 2 weeks they are just inseparable. I think it was mostly to do with the formal setting, but then they came in here and it was like, they were just able to play and now the two of them are now just the best of friends, and I actually still can't believe it. Even like fisticuffs in school, and then the first day I came here I saw his parents, and I said oh no they are going to clash so badly here, but I made the leaders aware of the situation and 2 weeks in, there was no issue anymore.

- I also found that my son and another boy who goes to the same school, they sort of clung to one another, they see each other outside of the school setting but funny enough when they are here, they don't actually come near each other, so now they have the confidence to go and socialise instead of using each other as a safety net.

- My son has a serious chronological disorder, he isn't actually entitled to therapy anymore, they only did 3 rounds with him and then you are left to provide it yourself, i.e. go private, but I have found that for my child, coming here, has helped even more so than school but I've also found that my child just won't speak Irish, which isn't accepted as well at school but I still feel like this is beneficial as there isn't so much pressure in the cumann.

- Neither does mine I try to speak Irish to him and he just replies in English, now he understands everything I say but I don't know if the processing is just too much for him or what else it is.

Do you think the language element of the service provided by Glór na Móna has something to do with how well they are progressing?

- Yes and I actually found that from my child coming here his speech and actually being able to hear what he was saying became so much clearer. I think that is because my child is in a setting where other people do not judge him, for his language, his behaviour, whereas there is that judgement in school, when he is here he has that confidence, and his speech has got a lot better.

- I think it's also the way the staff deal with the kids as well, they lift the children up, they empower them, rather than having to come down to their level and patronise them.

- They feel respected, they feel a part of something and involved in the cumann. They respect the children for who they are.

What other services are available for your child in your area? Would you be comfortable in sending them to other services?

- My child goes to a club in North Belfast, it's also another Irish-medium provision, it's not that he doesn't enjoy it he does, but it's all the kids from his school that goes to it, so when he comes here, he can be himself, rather than having to act like someone he isn't in front of people who know him.

- I live down the Lower Falls, and I mean there is nothing, there are youth clubs and stuff down there but they just don't understand my child. They'll never understand him because there's a lot of kids from where I am who would kind of be 'street savvy' and I cannot let him, I mean I only started at the start of last week, letting him and his sister, play outside my house, and he said but mummy why can't I go down the street and play like all the rest of them, and I just had to tell him, because you are not like the rest of them. But he kept asking why and he was probably just thinking that there must be something wrong with him, so I then had to explain to him about Aspergers, and how he gets excited and when he gets excited he could maybe just bolt out on to the road, and then thinking about, if the other children did something bad and he was there, they would point the blame at him because of his naivety.

- They just don't know where they stand, you know I've had my child say to me 'mummy my friends say I have anger problems' and I say what do you mean 'anger problems' and he says because I'm screaming and I say well you aren't screaming out of anger, you're doing it because you are exited or heightened, he just has no social awareness but then again when he is here, he just doesn't care.

- The children know they are surrounded by other children who are the same as them, plus they are continuing on their Irish, so they are learning that, and more, and that's what is actually so good about it. Because they're getting the Irish interaction, although he hates talking it in school, it's just different.

What needs to be done in the next 4 years to enhance the service at Glór na Móna?

- I definitely think the staff would benefit from more training in different coping strategies and dealing with the complexity of our children's needs.

- I think as well that is needed just to keep up with the times

- My child actually would benefit maybe from some physical activity, he put on weight from lockdown from not going outside an playing and that is something that we would worry about. Maybe educating the children on how to be healthier or implementing healthy habits.

- Organising trips as well, that helps with the children being physical and helps them with their interactions.

- I think also the frequency of the club nights, maybe adding an additional night to the service would be beneficial, I think the biggest thing is that this is our children's only social experience, their only social outlet, so increasing that capacity would be really brilliant for them.

Focus Group 2 – Teenagers

What kind of things have you learned from coming to the Cumann? What have you enjoyed about the service here at Glór na Móna?

- It's a special place, we get to come here and play with our friends and play on the playstation.

- We have learnt a lot of development skills, especially being people who needed help with that sort of thing, like social skills and communication

What are the benefits of coming to the Cumann?

- Well it's the only club of its kind specifically for people with learning difficulties and of course it's the only club where this is facilitated through the medium of Irish.

- It's kind of different from other clubs, from anything that I have seen before anyway.

- It's different from school because we aren't under pressure to do work

- We have a place like this in school but in school we do work, but here we get to develop our social skills

- School can be really stressful and noisy. The teachers make me stressed.

**What sort of things do you like to do in the Cumann?
What are the facilities available?**

- When I am here I love playing Yu-Gi-Oh cards with my friends
- I love playing football with everyone when I'm here, I love to get the chance to run about
- I have lots of fun when I come here, it's different from school because we don't have to do work all the time
- I like using the sensory room when I come here, it's dark and I feel calm when I am in there. There's different lights and colours in the room and it just feels really soothing when I'm in there.
- We don't have anywhere like the sensory room at home. My bedroom is probably the closest thing. That's why I like coming here, for the space
- It's just nice to be out of the house as well and to mix with other people.
- I feel happy coming to the Cumann to get away from my family and my house for a while.
- I just feel happy to see new faces, I feel like I always speak to the same people.
- I have more friends here than I do in school. I feel a lot more comfortable here than I do in school.

Do you attend any other clubs or partake in any other activities apart from coming to the Cumann?

- Two of us are in a music band and we also go to another club but they speak English there. It's a lot different than coming to Glór na Móna. I like coming here to use Irish as it is my first language.
- I don't really do anything else outside of coming to the Cumann. I more or less just stay at home and play on the computer.
- I also go to a bodhrán class which is taught through Irish, I really like it but it's closed at the minute because of Covid. Sometimes it's really noisy.

Are there other youth club services available in your areas?

- Yes but we prefer coming to the Irish club. There is a smaller number who come to the club at Glór na Móna.
- We like coming here because we speak Irish and other people understand us.
- I think this Cumann has better facilities than the other English club. The staff are better too. It feels like they are our friends.
- No, I had trouble trying to make friends in school and I didn't want to go out outside school. But I came here and I was able to make friends.

What would you like to see introduced to the Cumann over the next 4 years? Would any added facilities help?

- I don't really think about the future. I try to take just each day as it comes.
- I want to get rid of Covid so that it doesn't mean the Cumann will be closed down again.
- More playstations
- Maybe more people should start coming to the club so that we can meet more friends.
- No I wouldn't like that it would be too noisy.
- I come here for just peace and quiet and to stay up an extra 2 hours.
- I would like to see more development in the outside space, maybe a new football pitch or a different building which is bigger.
- I would like to go on more trips outside of the Cumann.

Do you think the Cumann could do anything which would help you with employability skills or to develop skills which you may need for the future?

- As I said, I just like to take each day as it comes, I try not to worry to much about the future.
- Maybe it would be good just to talk about choices and getting help to make the right choices for GCSE subjects and stuff.
- I would like to be an animator when I am older so it would be good maybe. to get some training on that or have someone come in and teach us how to do it.
- I would like to be an engineer.
- I want to be Gordon Ramsay. Maybe some cookery lessons would be good.
- No he just wants that job so he can scream at people.
- It would be nice to get some advice on what we can do when we are older. Different jobs and things.

What about support? Do you feel like you are supported here?

- The people in here understand us and they give us support. They understand how to speak to people and to speak to us with social problems.
 - It's a safe space for us to be.
- It's easier to speak to people in the Cumann. You don't be nervous and you can take your time to speak to people.

Focus Group 2 - Parents

Thank you everyone for joining me to have this focus group discussion. I am just going to open the conversation and ask firstly what impact the services here at Glór na Móna have had on your child?

- It really helped with my wee boy's confidence. He doesn't go outside of the house other than going to school. He really hadn't been coming here long since before lockdown so I suppose I even saw a difference in his confidence in that short space of time that the facility was open.
- I'm the same, this is really my child's only social outlet, he wouldn't have gone out, we've only managed maybe once or twice to arrange with some friends for him to go out with, but that was almost like a military operation to organise.
- Yes, the same for my daughter, she would never really go out at all. Coming here is a really big thing for her, she seems to be coming out of herself a wee bit just by meeting other people.
- I think just coming here it makes leaving the house and coming to a youth club more normalised, it's just more normal activities it's not you know, scheduled play dates, it's just what every other child seems to be doing.
- My son literally had no friends, he went to school and all but he definitely didn't socialise with anybody and it was a big thing for him 'I have no friends, I have no friends' but he comes straight into here tonight and starts talking to others straight away. You know, he's walking in taller, he has confidence coming in and it's almost as if this is his space where he can be himself.

Have you noticed differences in physical or social behaviour or communication abilities in your child since they started coming to Glór na Móna?

- I think since the lockdown kicked in I definitely noticed an increase of anxieties because my son couldn't get out to socialise and he wasn't able to see family and friends and that but thankfully for technology, he could link in and do some of the summer programmes and talk to some of his friends. I don't think without that sort of contact, he would have been ok because he enjoyed coming here and talking to friends and didn't feel as isolated.

- I have only told my son recently that he has autism because I was almost afraid to tell him, because if you tell him something, he asks 'why am I the last to hear this' and it worries him. It was just difficult because of this lockdown, when they have their own wee clicks and spaces together, they weren't able to do that. He used to meet with his friends at lunchtime and play those wee Yu-Gi-Oh cards and he was really getting into that. But then lockdown came, no cards anymore which meant no friends.

- The summer scheme stuff, I was dreading it, but it turned out that my son was actually teaching me. See when they had to make pancakes or even the time they made French toast, you know that was stuff that was so important for their own independence because eventually I would love for my child to live on his own and have a life like that. So him being in charge and actually being able to teach me and encouraging other people in the group to get involved too. I saw a really different side to him.

Do you think the language element of the service provided by Glór na Móna has something to do with how well they are progressing?

- I think the language element definitely helps and it makes the children feel more confident in being able to come to the Cumann. My son used to go to a music class through English medium, and it was a struggle to get him to go to that, but then we found a music class for him to attend through the medium of Irish and he was much happier going to that. But I think that even though he knew other people, it was something to do with the language that made him feel like part of the community, that he fitted in there, so I definitely think a service through the Irish medium is beneficial for them.

What other services are available for your child in your area? Would you be comfortable in sending them to other services?

- I think it's a really difficult thing to do, I know certainly that my child wouldn't go to an activity outside of school, I just about got him here.

- It was a struggle to get them here.

- I think they recognised people from being in the Irish-medium system and from classroom assistants from their school also working in the facility, it was just the familiarity of it all. I think if this service was run by strangers to them it would be a lot harder to get them to attend.

- I think it's also knowing that other children from their school go to the Cumann, as soon as one person found out that such and such was going, they felt much more comfortable going too.

- My son did ju jitsu but he pulled away from that, it just got too much for him, too intense. But we have managed to get him to go to boxing through an autism charity, and he loves going to that and also to an autistic specific sports group which we are receiving funding for.

What needs to be done in the next 4 years to enhance the service at Glór na Móna?

- I think, well you know I was just talking to another parent before we started about the fact that my son is turning into a man, whereas he doesn't necessarily understand all the changes that are coming with puberty and we just assume that they are young people with autism who aren't interested in relationships or that they aren't taking in stuff that's going on with their bodies. But he is definitely not open to talk about either because as soon as I mention anything at all he just switches off, so you know, maybe just having those conversations with them, especially amongst their peers is essential. And there really is so much change going on.

- When I come in to pick my child up, it's good to sort of see what they like, but maybe the focus could be shifted to get them interested in other things and not just stuck with the one game or to get them to be more active.

- My son is never going to be a die-hard sports fan, but I would love to see some sort of exercise, some sort of physical activity be incorporated in the programme to try and incorporate a healthy lifestyle and healthy habits.

- I think our kids do miss out because they may not be the best footballer or they may not have the best co-ordination skills, so the children in school who are good at sports get picked, and our

children seem to be left behind. We need to disregard competition and make it more about achieving a healthy and physical lifestyle and the importance of that. I don't think they are getting that time or attention.

- Schools are just too competitive in general, but definitely in certain sports.

- Maybe just to take in to consideration the sports that our kids want to do, I know my son loved basketball, but because no one else took an interest in basketball they didn't keep it up in the school.

-I'd also make the recommendation of extending the services over 2 or 3 nights a week, but again, I'm not sure if my child would leave the house for 2 or 3 nights a week.

- Maybe if it was for an extra night, just to have the option there.

- You know the way it's 10 o'clock for finishing, sometimes that can be quite late, now I know the other group comes first but say if another child has to wait and come back to pick up their older sibling, they will be up to 10 o'clock too and that's too late for them.

- I do think my son would come more often, he just loves it, and he actually doesn't like when there's trips, this is just his wee safe space.

- Maybe a bus service would be beneficial as well, to save parents, because I don't drive and I am coming over from the other side of Belfast in a taxi at 10pm and I feel so tired, and my other wee child is beside me because I can't leave him as I am a single parent.

- Yes transport would be an issue for me as well, a trusted transportation service for children would be a great help. It might also attract more members as well.

Any input from your children's teachers about your child's behaviour since coming to the service here at Glór na Móna?

- I would definitely say that coming here has eased the transition from my child moving from primary to secondary school. He never had friends but he was looking forward to going to secondary school as he knew people who went to the Cumann who would be there too.
- It was just before the lockdown came, my son was just really getting into it. And as a result of that he just came to start loving school.
- They have their own wee groups in school, but then they come here and it's the same faces they see in school. So, they feel safe here, and then that also helps them in turn with coping with school, they know their friends will be there too. It all links up.
- I'm just amazed that my son will go somewhere where there are people like this. He would go for a walk, he would go to the shop by himself, but he likes to be by himself, until he was introduced to the services here.
- My son felt a responsibility to come here tonight, he loves this place and he felt like he needed to come here to support it and try and make it better for him and his friends.
- From a parent's point of view, I feel relaxed knowing that my child is coming here, knowing that he will enjoy it but also that the staff just get our kids. He has been to other situations, and you just know that the person involved doesn't get my child. When you can put your trust in the organisers that they will have your child's back if

they do have a meltdown and that they will look after them but to also help them by coming out of their shells, that for me gives me peace of mind.

Testimonials

'It's clear that there was and is a huge gap regarding support for Irish-medium schools and that gap is there on a legislative basis, even when legislation may possibly come into effect, there will still be huge gaps in provision, and policy. Even if you look at the authorities, resources and facilities, exam boards and other organisations which provide facilities and resources all over the six counties, and it's also true with regards to capital support when you look at school accommodation, I would say that on every level or every criteria which is explored or judged on the basis of how well the sector is facilitated, I would say that the Irish-medium education sector suffers in regard to every one of them; capital, resources, accommodation, finance, policies, legislation, strategies. The sector is left in second place, and not only are we speaking about inequality here, we are talking also about equity, because there has been such a lack of investment in the IM sector for such a long time, we now need even more support than ever.' – **Conradh na Gaeilge**

'How did we succeed? How did we get so far if we didn't learn about the standard curriculum? But that was the thing, our community was just so different, we were radical and revolutionary. And people just aren't revolutionary any more. Of course, the sector is growing and developing but we are kind of just going with the model of the curriculum that is there already, I think it definitely needs another revolution.'

– **Muintir Bhóthar Seoighe**

'I think we definitely need an independent additional needs service. Definitely, and I would love for something like this to be developed. I think if we had a sectoral centre in which we used and came together with the expertise which we already have in the sector in the correct way, that would be great. Now, inclusion of course is the most important thing at present, that is the biggest approach that we try to implement with regards to additional needs, although, inclusion can be uncomfortable for a lot of people. It can be uncomfortable for teachers, as it means those students who are most challenging or who present as having more prevalent needs, those who are the weakest, are in the same class with diligent learners, and on top of that, an additional language in play. So, when you think of the most important aspect here, is processing.'

– Emer

'IM schools are established in response to community demand for IM provision in their localities as was the case on the Shaw's Road, Belfast. As it was back then, a half-century ago, IME provision is still left to parents and community to plan, fund, support and develop which starts at the pre-school stage as an introduction to the immersion approach to education.

In contrast to the established traditional approach to education which, in the north, is essentially structured on a religious divide (Controlled-schools are primarily for the protestant community and Maintained schools are primarily for the catholic community) it is the State and its statutory bodies (Department of Education/Education Authority) that plan, fund, support and develop the education provision. This then is the basis for the legacy of inadequate and unsuitable accommodation, infrastructure, teaching-resources and the provision of essential support services to the pupils in IM schools.' – **Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta**

'The Irish medium youth sector is not state funded, at all. We always find ourselves having to work out of small pots of money and funding for us to keep going and there really is not an awful lot left at the end of the pot of money to expand our services as they are. But we really understood that an increase of young people with additional needs were coming to us, their parents coming to us as well, and saying we hear that you speak Irish in this youth club, my child is not very sociable and does not leave the house other than to attend school, they may feel more comfortable being around other children from their school in a social setting and this had been going on for a number of years. We really don't have the resources in order to have an extensive team, so when we were having to deal with 60 young people coming to our services and 4 youth workers, adding children with additional needs presented an even further challenge, and the number of children with additional needs coming to us just grew and grew each year, but we really were not equipped or trained to deal with this.'

– Glór na Móna



