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## Acknowledgements

The Board of Directors and staff team of Navan Springboard Company Ltd. would like to thank the families, parents and children that we have had the pleasure to work with during the last year. At times we have had the privilege to share your joys, your pain, your hopes and your tears. Together through our work and your great efforts, things have improved for you and your children and we thank you for letting us be part of your lives.

The Board of Directors and the Staff Team would also like to thank all those individuals and organisations who have supported the project throughout the last year.

Our work is made possible by the funding we receive from the Co. Meath Child Welfare and Family Support Services Office of the Health Service Executive. Due to the wider economic conditions within the Irish Economy and the funding available to the Health Service Executive, the funding provided to Navan Springboard for service delivery has been reduced thus posing particular challenges to the service. We have been assisted in facing these challenges by the operational support we receive from many family support services staff within the Health Service Executive, to you all, we say thank you.

In 2012 our work has also benefited from grants the HSE lottery Grant scheme which assisted in the delivery of the of a self esteem programme for children whose parents have experienced mental health problems. We also received funding from The Family Support Agency which aided our counselling support programme which is detailed further in this report. We are grateful for these grants which aided our work.

During the year we continued to work in partnership with other non-government organisations to improve the services available to families and parents. A special thank you must be extended to the managers and staff of Meath Women's Refuge and Support Services, Navan School Completion Programme, and Co Meath GAA Development Officer, each of whom have assisted us in the delivery of a particular service within our work.. They have provided us with support in all areas of our services, and this has benefited the families we have worked with.

We look forward to your continued support and involvement during the coming years.

## CHAIRPERSON'S ADDRESS

I am delighted to present the Annual Report of Navan Springboard Company Ltd for 2012 on behalf of our Board of Directors, Management and Staff. Over the last fourteen years, Navan Springboard programmes have enhanced the lives of many children and families due to the professionalism, dedication and commitment offered by the staff and manager of Navan Springboard Company.

This report highlights the continuation of our core family support work through the variety of services we provide.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank our out-going Directors who have given their time and dedication during the year, ensuring the company continues to deliver to a high level. I also welcome our new Directors who have joined the Board in recent months and look forward to the experience and expertise that they bring with them.

On behalf of the Board of Directors I wish to thank all the agencies that have supported us and contributed to the development of our programmes. In particular we would like to thank our primary funder, Health Service Executive, for their funding, their guidance and their advice.

Finally, a special thanks to our Manager and Project staff for their continued consistent dedication and expertise, enhancing the lives of many children and families. I would like to thank staff members who resigned recently and also to welcome new staff members to the team.

We look forward to new opportunities and challenges during the coming year.

Thank you,

Christina Nestor  
Chairperson

## Background and Structure of Navan Springboard

### Mission Statement

“Navan Springboard Co. Ltd. is an integrated Community based Project working in an innovative and holistic way with families, to address issues which affect the parent child relationship, primarily where the children are aged between 6-12 years. We aim to support the family to enhance the life and experiences of the children.”

The purpose of the Project is to act as a catalyst to the family, the community and agencies, addressing mutually relevant issues affecting families to result in solutions that will challenge and overcome the issues”.

Our work is undertaken in keeping with the National Agenda for Children Services and the five national outcomes identified for improving the lives of children within the state. These are; All children should be ;

- Healthy, both physically and mentally;
- Supported in active learning;
- Safe from accidental and intentional harm, and secure in the immediate and wider physical environment;
- Economically secure;
- Part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and community, and included and participating in society

(National Strategy for Research and Data on Children’s Lives 2011 – 2016, p17 2011)

### Our Aims

We have three core aims, which guide us in our work with families.

-To promote the welfare of young people and their families in innovative and challenging ways

-To work and liaise closely with families and other agencies involved, as a way of identifying issues and in turn to develop an integrated strategy to address them.

-To influence National Policy in developing new and alternative approaches and models of working with families.

### Our Ethos

In Springboard, everybody is accepted for the talents, strengths, skills and resources they possess. We believe that by working with children and their families in a respectful, caring way, we can empower and enable them to become the masters of their own lives. Ultimately it is our hope, that family life is a happy and nurturing experience for everyone.

To illustrate our ethos in working with parents and their children, the team at Navan Springboard have adopted five core values, which underpin the work of the project. They are as follows:

We work from a strengths based perspective, thereby using the inherent strengths and supports that each family have, to begin to improve their situation.

Respect is our corner stone; we endeavour to treat each individual family member with respect and fairness.

Empowerment, we work with each family at their starting point and at their own pace, as far as is practical we involve the parents and children in all the decisions with regard to our involvement with them.

Partnership, we strive to work in partnership with other agencies and thereby assist in positive outcomes for the families and Communities we work in.

Team work, as individual staff we believe by supporting each other in our work, we deliver better support to the families with whom we work.

## History and Management Structure

Navan Springboard Family Support Project, (Navan Springboard Company Ltd.) is one of number of family support projects, which were initially launched by the Government under the Department of Health and Children in 1998.

Representatives of a range of voluntary and statutory organisations, manage the project in Navan. We are a Limited Company with Charitable Status – No CHY 13758.

The Board of Directors during 2012 comprised of the following;

*Christina Nestor*- Navan School Completion Project (Chairperson)

*Jim Mangan*-Community representative (Treasurer)

*Barbara Bolger* - Service Development Officer H.S.E.

*Deborah Dwyer* – Manager Citizen Information Service (Secretary)

*Mairead McGuire*- Co-ordinator Navan Rapid Programme

*Leonard Callaghan* - Service Development Officer H.S.E

*Shay O'Neill*- Retired Social Care Worker.

## Staff Team

The Staff Team at Springboard for 2012 comprised of the following;

*Siobhan Crosby* – Project Worker

*Eileen Dowdall*, – Project Worker

*Adrienne Heeney*, – Project Worker

*Laura Walsh*, – Project Worker

*Loreto Martin* - Project Development Office on the He's My Dad Project  
& Children's Access Support Service Co-Ordinator;

*Patricia Fay Cooper*, - Sessional Worker Access & Family Support.

*Martina Devin* - Sessional Worker Access Support Service.

*Alacoque Fitzsimons*. - Sessional Worker Access & Family Support

*Valerie Walsh*. - Administration Officer

*Sé Fulham*. - Manager

The team brings with them a wealth of skills, experience and qualifications in a variety of disciplines such as Social care and Social Science, Counselling, Psychotherapy, Youth and Community work and Secretarial/business studies. Most importantly of all, the team have great enthusiasm for working with parents and children to assist in improving their lives.

## Service Structure.

Figure 1 is a graphical representation of our service provision during 2012. At the centre of our work are the Individual Programmes of Family Support (IPFS) that we provide to parents and their children. The outer ring of services has grown organically out of IPFS and are open to parents and their children in Co. Meath

Fig. 1 Navan Springboard Service Provision 2012.



Individual Programmes of Family Support (IPFS) are generally our most intensive level of support to parents and their children. As our service provision has developed, we have developed a array of services ranging from low to high levels of support; this facilitates us to tailor our response to the specific needs of the family / parent that we are working with. In the following pages, our work during 2012 will be outlines under each of the service headings.

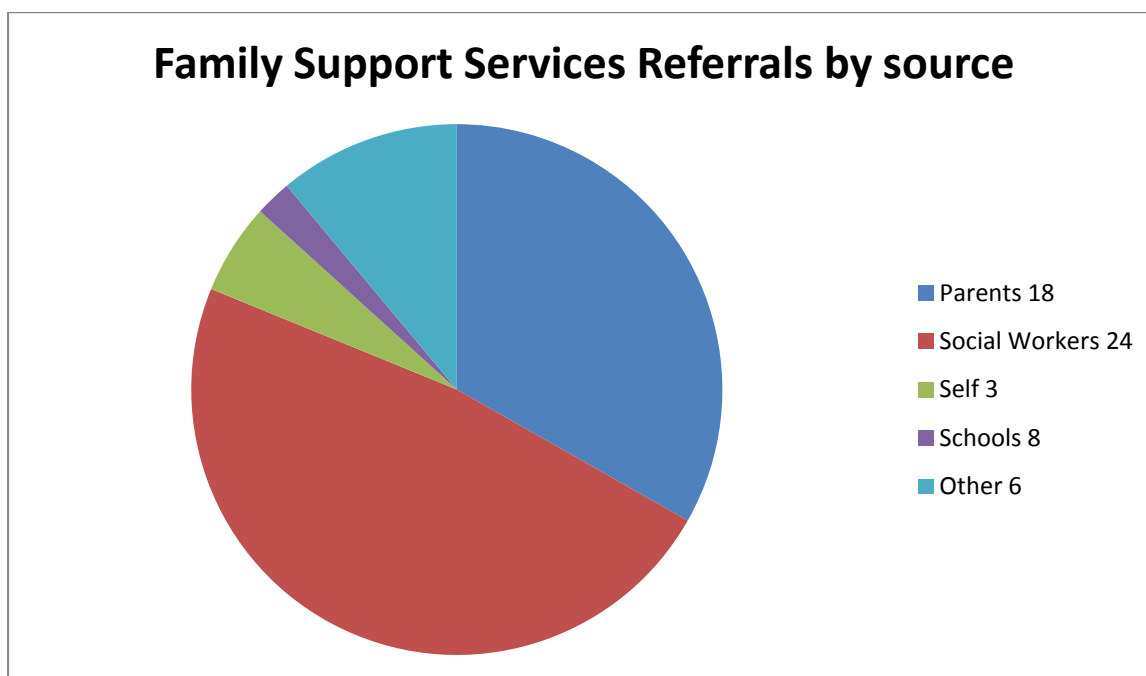


## The Figures

During 2012 Navan Springboard engaged with parents and in many cases their children from 162 families across our range of service provision.

### Family Support Provision funded by the Child Welfare and Family Section of Children Services within the HSE.

The services funded by the Health Service Executive under Family Support include our Individual Programmes of Family Support, Group Work in Support of Positive Parenting, and part of our counselling support provision<sup>1</sup>. Collectively these programmes engaged with 96 families during 2012. Some of the parents in these families would have commenced working with Navan Springboard during 2011. In the course of 2012 we received 59 referrals for programmes within our HSE funded Family Support provision.



By the end of 2012 we closed 63 of the 96 families and 33 continued to engage with the service into 2013.

### Children Access Support Service.

During 2012 the Children Access Support Service engaged with 66 families. 22 families with 34 children availed of the service through child protection services of the HSE. An additional 38 families with 33 children availed of the service on a private pay per use bases. An additional 6 parents sought the service but agreement could not be reached with the other parent of their child for the access to proceed. All of the families availing of access support

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<sup>1</sup> The counselling provision provided within Navan Springboard is funded by Client Contributions, a small grant from the Family Support Agency and money from the Family Support Service Level Agreement with the HSE.

via the HSE were referred by child protection social workers. All of the families that engaged with access support on private bases were self referrals.

### **Geographical Spread.**

In previous years Navan Springboard Family Support Service was very focused on the Navan area in its provision of its HSE funded Family Support Services. During 2012 the service accepted referrals from across Co. Meath. This change was in respect to demand rising from increasing need and growing recognition of the service making a positive difference in the lives of the families that we work with<sup>2</sup>. We engaged with families from across county Meath within our Family Support Provision, including the followings area, Bettystown, Athboy, Trim, Dunshaughlin, Kells, Mullagh, and Enfield.

Due to the uniqueness of the Access Support Service, we have had families attending from across the Northeast and Dublin.

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<sup>2</sup> The increased recognition of making a positive difference to families is evident in the closure evaluations from Families and feedback from peers in other agencies.

## Individual Programmes of Family Support

During 2012, the following is a breakdown of activity within the Individual Programmes of Family Support area.

No of Families engaged in IPFS during 2012

Individual Programmes of Family Support	Families	Children	Mothers	Fathers
No of Families engaged in IPFS during 2012	29	48	27	10

The 29 families how partook of IPFS, 11 of these families commenced during 2012. We continue to focus on a timely and time limited response to the needs of the families that we work with. For some of the families that we work with, their issues are of long standing and can take considerable time to progress for the benefit of the children.

The work plan for each family is designed based on their individual needs and strengths. Examples of the type of activities involved in intensive family support include, weekly one to one therapeutic sessions with the child and or parent, family meetings, family life enhancement activities such as family trips, group parenting programmes, home visits, parent coaching in the home, and summer activity programme. As appropriate, families who engage with an Individual Programme of Family Support, may also be offered and prioritised for the other services available within Navan Springboard

### Criteria for Individual Programmes of Family Support

The project works with parents and their children, predominately living in the Navan areas, who are struggling to overcome emotional / behavioural difficulties, which are having a negative impact on their family and personal life. In some circumstances these issues left un-addressed may lead to;

- Children/ Young People failing to reach their full potential
- Children/ Young People displaying trouble with authority figures, e.g. school, An Garda,
- Children likely to require more intensive intervention of state care services at a later point in their childhood.
- Adults requiring additional support with their parenting due to their own mental health issues.

Navan Springboard accepts referrals directly from families and agencies working with families such as schools, public health nurses, social workers, gardaí, youth organisations etc. A key aspect of any referral is the desire by the family to want to improve the situation they find themselves in.

All work undertaken with families is with their consent and their full agreement to be involved with us. When an agency makes a referral, it is expected, where appropriate, that the agency continues their involvement with the family in conjunction with the work that Navan Springboard undertake with the family.

## Referral Process

The Project receives referrals, primarily in two ways:

-Directly from parents

-Agency referrals

- When a parent self-refers to us, a Referral meeting takes place between Springboard staff and the family. Project staff will complete a Referral form with the family. The referral form seeks to identify the issues the family / agency believe are affecting the family and what areas they wish Navan Springboard to address with them.

- When an impending referrer contacts the Project, we will suggest that she/he firstly advise the family of our existence, what we are about and of the referral. By doing this, the family is given the opportunity to approach the Project themselves with regards to obtaining information on the project or making a Self-referral.

- As required, an Information Sharing Meeting can be arranged between Springboard staff and the family. A referrer can also attend this meeting or a separate meeting can be established between Springboard and the referrer. The family are welcome to invite additional family members/friends. Families or impending referrers are also welcome to telephone the Project re information.

- A worker from Springboard or the referrer, if appropriate, will then contact the family and arrange a suitable date and time to hold a Referral meeting.

- It is at this meeting that the referrer, where appropriate, the family and staff from Springboard sit down together and begin to establish the family's picture of their situation, any existing supports in place and the type of support the family and organisation feel could be offered.

-The decision as to whether a family becomes involved can be decided immediately at the meeting, or within one week, if time is required for a decision to be reached. At times due to demand the family may have to wait for a worker to be available to begin work with them.

-Prior to devising a Family Support Plan, other agencies may also be contacted, but only with the family's consent. In devising plans, the concerns and needs of all will be taken into account.

During 2012 the waiting time from referral to a service being available for a family was up to four months, down from six months during 2011. Although we were able to reduce the time from 2011, our desire is to be able to respond more quickly, this objective is impacted upon by the reduction in funding.

## Individual Programmes of Family Support

The main component of our work is to provide support to families where there are significant difficulties, which left unaddressed may have negative long term affects for the child/ren and or parents. The nature of this work is dependent on the needs identified by each individual young person and his / her family.

A tailored Family Support Plan is devised between each family and their Key worker, initially on a three-month basis, taking on board the interests and concerns of any other relevant agencies. The work plans for families are based on the national policy of The Agenda for Children's Services.

Reviews of these plans are held at the end of a three-month period, with the family and referrer (if appropriate), to assess and review outcomes and adjust interventions as required. Once the needs of the child and his/her family have been identified, individual and group based programmes of work can be established for both the child and their parents. Such work can take place in the child's home; school or project offices and consist of:

- Home/centre visits with parents and children
- Individual support sessions with parents and children
- Issue based groups for children
- Therapy sessions for children
- Counselling/Relaxation service for parents
- Parents Support/Social group
- Parenting courses
- Family Days Out
- Self-esteem groups in schools
- Summer Programme

The key implementation method for working with children and their parents to achieve the above out comes is through individual support sessions.

## Individual Support Sessions.

Based on an assessment of need, each family works with an assigned worker from Springboard, who along with other relevant organisations devises a plan of work which is specific, measurable and achievable for all involved. Part of this work may involve the families' assigned worker undertaking an individual programme of work with a child and or parent in relation to specific issues e.g. tips on positive parenting, anger-management, dealing with loss and separation. As stated earlier, these sessions can take place in the family's home, school setting or our offices.

The expected outcomes for Parents who are involved with the Individual Programmes of Family Support are;

- Improvement in satisfaction with being a parent,
- Reduction in stress,
- Improved relationships with other agencies e.g. schools,
- Improvement's in family's support network,
- Improved communication and involvement with their children,
- Improved management of family finances,

### **Home/Centre visits.**

Home visits are a central part of our work, particularly as many of our parents have a number of children under school going age; therefore it is easier for the worker to call to the home than for the parent to get to our offices. These visits form a central point of contact and support for many parents with their assigned worker. Support and advocacy work is offered in relation to parenting, housing, educational, financial and childcare issues.

It is through these visits, either in the family home or our offices that we practice our 3T therapy, 'taking Time to listen and support while Talking over a cup of Tea'. In this informal process, we aid the parents to identify the issues affecting their family, identify ways to address the issues and support the parent following through on their plans.

The following is an example of some of the activities that were undertaken with Families engaged with Individual Programmes of Family Support during 2012.

### **In-house Summer Activities**

#### ***Children Summer Camps***

Our in-house summer camp ran for three weeks over July and August. The programme was offered to eighteen children, with six due to attend each week. The smaller groups allowed for more individual attention for the children particularly for those who sometimes find large group settings difficult. Some of the activities that took place included a visit to an Ice Cream parlour to see the ice cream been made which was really enjoyed by all. Alongside this there were trips to the Drogheda Water Park, the cinema and Bowling. A fun week was had by all.

#### ***Family Day Trips.***

As part of the Individual Programmes of Family Support, we offered those families with little resources the opportunity of a family day trip during the long summer holidays. This involved the family (parents and their children) going for a day out with their assigned project worker to a variety of venues such as Dublin Zoo, the seaside, bowling and the cinema. Over the summer 6 families availed of these day trips, and many happy memories for children and parents were created.

#### ***Mid- term school breaks***

During the Easter and Halloween breaks the children, as a reward for all their hard work during the terms are treated to a trip out. This year the children were brought to the local cinema, for an afternoon of fun and entertainment.

## Group work in support of Positive parenting

A corner stone of Family Support Services is to ensure any intervention is proportional to the issue the family wish to resolve, research has shown that family support is at its best when the intervention is at the minimum level possible to resolve the issues of concern. Not every family needs an Individual Programme of Family Support. In recent years Navan Springboard has developed a range of groups and courses to support and develop parents. This provision allows us to offer parents a level of support appropriate to their need. As parents engage with the groups or courses that we run, they can be offered additional support if necessary. The following is the details on the main groups and courses that ran in Navan Springboard during 2012.

### Parents Social Group

Parent Social Group	Attended by 15 mothers with 12 regular attendees during 2012
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The Parent's Social Group is a social and creative group, with a strong emphasis on support. The group provides a weekly outlet for its members to link with other mothers, chat and learn new crafts, while also picking up support and ideas on parenting issues.

During 2012 we had 15 members attended the group with a weekly average attendance of 9. For some members the group has given them the courage to try new things and avail of opportunities that in the past they would not have risked taken. During this time with decreased budgets the challenge is to meet the needs of the group, informing the group of this, the members decided that they would supply the food each week, freeing up some money towards the activities. This has allowed the women to have more ownership of the group.

The aim of the group is to supply a platform for the participants to build their social networks and improve their self esteem through the use of different media of crafts, rather than trying to raise it directly it is easier to focus elsewhere, such as a craft, which while everyone is given the same basic supplies, not two projects turn out the same, self esteem rises as a happy side effect of a change in living.

For anyone to be psychologically and physically healthy then core needs have to be fulfilled. Being clear about what you need and making efforts to meet those needs constructively means you will naturally have better self esteem as a by product of living well. Some basic human needs which can be met through the group include:

The need to give and receive attention.

The need for creativity and stimulation.

The need for connection to others.

The need for a sense of safety and security.

We all need to engage in activities which we enjoy and in which we can ‘lose ourselves’. The following is the feedback from some of the attendees on the group;

*“My children have benefitted from me being calmer in dealing with everyday issues.”*

*“I look forward to the group each week and my self esteem is great when I leave at 12.”*

*“I have made many friends who have become essential in my life and the support I get has been a godsend to me.”*

*“Coming to the group helps maintain my mental health which benefits my child, also if you are having any problems with your child you can discuss them at the group.”*

Views of Parents how attended the parent’s social group.

### Swings & Slides Parenting Skills Programme

The Swings and Slides Parenting Programme was offered both to parents who avail of our caseload managed service and to parents in the wider community. Some of the topics addressed in the programme included: the benefits of routines; listening to your child; tips for managing your child’s behaviour; healthy eating etc. The programme was designed to enhance the existing skills and strengths of parents by offering them the opportunity to explore new ideas, address their concerns and share their experiences of being a parent. Navan Springboard offered 3 ‘Swings and Slides’ Parenting Programmes throughout 2012.

Swings & Slides Parenting Skills Programme	Parents	Spring	Summer	Autumn
No of parents engaged in Swings and Slides Programme during 2012	26 across three programmes	10 (7 completed)	10 (10 completed)	6 (6 completed)

The feedback we received from this course was very positive, with parents commenting that they found it very ‘friendly, helpful, easy to talk to others, fun and enjoyable’. One parent said she ‘it was the best course going and a must for all parents’.

According to one parent “I learned to listen to my children and have more fun with them’

Another parent reported “it was really nice to talk to other parents and share difficulties and problems and know you weren’t the only one’.

### Strengthening Families Programme

The Strengthening Families Programme (SFP) is a 14 –session family skills training programme developed by Dr. Karol L. Kumpfer and Associates at the University of Utah in 1982. The programme is for parents and children to work together and has been proven to help build communication skills, improve family and behaviour management and have fun in the process!



The SFP is designed to allow parents and their children to build healthy communication skills that build up positive relationships within families. These new skills assist and reduce high risk behaviours that may lead to substance misuse, depression, violence and aggression, involvement in crime and school failure in 12-17 year old children.

This exciting new initiative has been undertaken in various regions in Ireland and Navan Springboard Family Centre host one such initiative in the Family Resource Centre, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath from September 2011- January 2012. This was only possible due to the commitment of the agencies involved (Navan Springboard and Navan School Completion Project) and it was a great example of inter-agency co-operation.

The SFP curriculum is divided into three sections each week (Parent skills training, Teen skills training and Family life skills training) taught in 14 two-hour periods. In the first hour, parents and children participate in separate groups. Parents learn new skills to increase desired behaviours in children by using:

Attention

Rewards

Clear communication

Effective discipline

Substance use education

Problem solving

And limit setting

The teen/ children group skills cover a variety of themes such as, how to communicate positively, understand feelings, cope with criticism and manage stress, develop social skills, learn problem solving, resisting peer pressure, understanding the consequences of substance abuse and how short term consequences affect long term dreams and goals. The group also explore why teens need to comply with parental rules and what parents want for their children.

During the second hour the families join together and practice structured family activities, family meetings, healthy communications skills, effective discipline reinforcing positive behaviour in each other, and jointly planning family activities.

Typical weekly class meeting:

Dinner- families sit together with group leaders for a meal

1<sup>st</sup> hour-separate Parent's group and Teens' group- 2 leaders for each group

2<sup>nd</sup> hour- Families rejoin – 2 group leaders

Overall the SFP was very successful.

<b>Strengthening Families Programme</b>	Completed by	Completed by	Completed by
11 families commenced the programme	7 Families	7 Parents	8 children

### **Social Skills Group for Girls.**

During February and May, we ran a girls group over a 12 week period. The group was targeted at children of parents who had experienced poor mental health at some point. The group aimed to build self esteem issues, develop social skills and teach about friendships. It was girls aged between 10 and 12 years and offered to 12 children in total. 9 children took up places in the group and from these, 7 participated in the whole group, with 2 having to pull out due to personal circumstances during the latter part of the group. The children's referrals came through parents, local community agencies and local schools. The group had 2 facilitators and we met regularly to plan and review each session, taking into account what worked well and what needed to be changed.

Some of the girls knew each other outside of the group and others knew nobody – each experience brought its own set of challenges to each child. We had some children who were very outgoing and mixed easily and others who were very shy and found coming to the group a real challenge initially.

We used a variety of mediums including art, music, role-play, conversation and exercises to meet these objectives and to add variety and new skills to the group. Our activities included icebreaker exercises, family tree work, and self expression exercises, looking at the masks we wear and why, feelings, friendships, body issues and vision boards.

We finished the group with a celebration where each child received a gift and a certificate for their attendance. A lot of the children swapped contact details in order to keep in touch and all children expressed an interest in attending future groups. Their feedback included comments that 'they really enjoyed the group, it was fun, they made new friends, they learnt new things and that they will miss it in the coming weeks.' This group was made possible by a small grant from the National Lottery via the HSE.

<b>Social Skills Group for Girls</b>	Completed by
9 girls started the programme	7 girls. Families

## He's My Dad Project

He's My Dad Project	Availed of by 21 Men	Who are fathers to 40 children.
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### Introduction

The 'He's My Dad Project' was initiated in early 2007. Staff in Navan Springboard Family Support Services were aware that there was little engagement with men in family support services generally. There was also a large unmet need in terms of parenting support for fathers, particularly male lone parents and separated parents. Springboard began to look for ways to engage fathers by highlighting the importance they play in their children's lives.

In 2008 under the RAPID programme through dormant accounts Springboard received a grant to employ a part-time worker to develop and deliver the He's My Dad Project. Based on the evidence of the benefit of the work gained during 2009 and 2010, Springboard negotiated with the HSE to include funding for the He's My Dad Project as part of their service level agreement with the HSE for 2011 and this funding has also been agreed for 2012. This funding facilitated for a project worker to deliver the programme over two days per week.

Dads can contact the service directly, or other professionals can seek the service and with the man's consent, we will follow up with them and invite them to meet with us to see how we may be able to assist them.

### Advocacy Support and Weekly Group Meeting.

During 2012 the project was delivered through two main avenues, Advocacy Support and the weekly Support Group. The advocacy support provides one to one assistance and support for men on issues impacting on their parenting role. 21 fathers availed of the Advocacy Support Service during 2012, and between them they had 40 children.

Some of the men described the Advocacy Support in the following terms;

'Brilliant I don't know where I'd be with out yous and my family think the same' View of a young father.

The He's My Dad weekly support group provides an opportunity for men to come together and discuss the stress, challenges, joys and fun of being a Dad. The group meet on Thursday morning with a core group of 6 to 8 attending each week. Most of the fathers will also have availed of the Advocacy Support Service.

'Being able to speak with people in the same situation as myself makes me feel like i am not alone' The view of a lone father.

### Father and Child Events

As part of the programme for the He's My Dad Project we organised three father and child events during the year.

In February 2012 a group of 10 dads and their 21 children went to the Circus. Everyone seemed to really enjoy this event.

In the summer of 2012, 6 fathers and their 11 children spent the day in Tayto Park. This was a fun packed day for dads and children as all ages were catered for.

At Christmas 8 dads and their 15 children went to the Causey Farm to see Santa. This was a magical event for everyone and a joy to see the children's faces as they petted the reindeers, met Mrs Clause, saw where they slept and then to see Santa coming down the chimney with a special present with their name on it.

These outings gave staff a chance to engage with dads on a different level, and to offer extra support if required, whilst also sharing in happy fulfilled events with fathers and their children.

### Counselling Support

We aim to provide a brief counselling support in response to needs that arise for parents and or children in the course of our service provision. We provide counselling when requested and when funding allows by hiring in external appropriate personal. The service is funded by three elements, a grant from the Family Support Agency, a small amount of money from our Service Level Agreement with the HSE and by direct client contributions. Clients are charged according to their ability to pay. The client fee aids the client to take responsibility for their counselling, while also supporting our limited funding to go further.

The provision and the demand on our counselling support service continued to grow during 2012. We experienced requests for counselling as a first point of contact especially in relation to children.

<p>Counselling Support 2012 249 hours of counselling were provided.</p>	<p>Availed of by 20 Adults</p>	<p>Availed of by 11 children.</p>
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## **Interagency and Community Links**

Navan Springboard is active at a community and agency level in promoting a greater understanding and development of a supportive environment for families and the work of family support. In pursuit of this agenda the project undertook the following work during 2012.

### **Meath GAA Kellogs Cúl Camp 2012**

In previous years Navan Springboard has assisted children from the families that we were working with to attend the Meath Gaa Kellogs Cúl Camps at reduced rates. This was possible with the assistance of the GAA Development Officer for Co. Meath. In the run up to the summer of 2012, we spoke with the county development officer for the GAA and he generously offered to host a Cúl Camp for 65 children. The camp was targeted at children who would not be going on any holiday or attending other camps due to family circumstances.

This camp was co-ordinated by Navan Springboard, with children referred by Navan Springboard, HSE Family Support Staff and Navan School completion Programme. The camp was run during the first week in August and 65 children had a fun sporting week of instruction and activity. A great thank you from the children and their parents to the GAA for making it happen.

### **HSE Meath Family Support Management Meetings**

The Family Support and Child Welfare Manager hold a weekly management meeting for their service. As part of a close working relationship and assisting a co-ordinated response from both services, the Springboard Manager continued to attend these meetings on a monthly basis during 2012.

### **Meath Interagency Child, Youth and Family Support Forum.**

This forum provides an opportunity for Non-Government organisations and state service providers working in the area of child, youth and family support to exchange information and work in a collaborative way on issues of mutual concern. During 2012 Navan Springboard's Manager continued to chair this group.

### **Meath MOVE Programme.**

Navan Springboard act as treasurer to the Meath branch of the Move Programme and participate in the steering group. The group commenced the delivery of the second local programme in September 2012. The program started with 7 men and is due to finish in April 2013.

### **Navan School Completion Programme**

Navan Springboard continues to be active on the local management group of Navan School Completion Programme. There is a close working relationship between Springboard and school completion and this aids the service delivery of both groups.

**Fostering Approval Committee for Co. Meath.**

The manager of Navan Springboard is an active member of the HSE Fostering Approval Committee for Co. Meath.

## Meath Children's Access Service

Helping children to see their non-resident parent, following family break-up.

Within the work of Navan Springboard Family Support Services we were acutely aware of the distress and pain suffered by parents and children, who live apart from each other, following family break-up. Particularly for those who wish to remain an active part in their children's life. In many cases, the desire to be an active parent is prevented by the hurt and fallout from adult relationship break up. Research shows that children adapt better, following a family break up, if they can maintain a positive relationship with both their parents. It is our belief that children have a right to a positive relationship with both parents, as long as it's in the child's best interest.

In support of aiding children to stay in contact with both parents following break-up, we developed The Children's Access Support Service. Through this service, we assist both parents to agree an access support plan for the child/ren with their non-resident parent. We use our premises as an access venue, providing a safe homely environment alongside our child centred child first ethos.

The service was available Monday to Saturday from 9.30am – 5.30pm each day.

### The Children's Access Support Service Welfare

In the course of 2012 The Children's Access Support Service provided access support to 33 children and their parents. We had contact from a further 6 parents seeking access support to see their children (7 children in all) where agreement was not reached.

The Children's Access Support Service is provided on a pay per use bases, at rates of €25 per hour.

A father attending for access with his son;

*'To me everything is as normal as it can be with having a child where the mother & father are split up. I want to thank you so much for everything over the 12 months my child & I attended Springboard. We came from my child getting to know me to he wants talk to his daddy and always wanting to know when I flying back to Ireland for him & every phone ends with I love you daddy & me telling him I love him so much talk soon. Thank you very much & your staff for everything'.*

A mother supporting her daughter to attend access:

*'The access service has been my lifeline and my daughter wouldn't be able to see her dad only for the service. This service provides the space for my daughter to meet and develop a relationship with her dad in a homely friendly environment'*

### **Children's Access Support Service with the HSE Child Protection Services.**

Following a tendering process in 2010, the HSE Child Protection Services of Co. Meath entered into an agreement with Navan Springboard for the provision of an access support service for children to maintain and in some cases develop their relationship with their parent(s) following the children being placed in foster care. This service commenced operation in September 2011. In 2012 we have provided access support to 34 Children with their parents during the year. (22 families)

The feedback from the birth parents, social workers and foster parents was very positive, with different elements of the service impacting positively for each group. Parents reported that they felt more at ease with their children in the absence of the Social Worker observing their time with their children. Social Workers reported that the quality of the reports and the way that minor issues were dealt with on the spot to be very beneficial. The foster parents reported that the homily environment, the prepared nature of staff all aided the process.



## Conclusion

Our services continue to be in great demand and we thank the Health Service Executive for their continued funding. We are in a very privileged position to be able to assist adults in their parenting and thereby improve the quality of their children's lives. The maintenance and delivery of our services would not be possible without the dictation, hard work and imagination of the staff team, directors, counsellors and volunteers who work within Navan Springboard.

In 2012, Navan Springboard experienced an ongoing rise in the demand for its services; the increased demand is from Navan and across the county. Against this backdrop of increased demand our funding was cut by a further 5%. A key to effective family support is the timely delivery of services, as funding levels have been cut and demand increased, we have not always been able to ensure timely delivery. Cuts affect service delivery, and in our case that means the quality of family life for children and their parents.

As will be evident from this report, 2012 was a challenging year both from the perspective of the provision of effective efficient services and maintaining the services against the wider economic background. At the end of 2012, due to the projected cuts for 2013, we had two staff accept voluntary redundancy. We were very sorry to lose two very experienced staff, we thank them for their work and wish them well in their future. We know that following the subsequent restricting that we will be better placed to meet the challenges for 2013 and beyond.

For 2013 we will endeavour to maintain our current high level of service standards and provision. We look forward with hope, to the continued engagement of parents and their children and to working in partnership with other services who share our goals.

Sé Fulham  
Manager  
Navan Springboard Family Support Services