

# **LIFESTART FOUNDATION LTD**



**21<sup>st</sup>**



## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**2006/2007**

### ***Annual Report***

*September 2007*



***Lifestart Foundation***

*- educating parents, developing children*

## Mission Statement

The **Lifestart mission is** to produce better child development outcomes by educating parents on how young children develop and learn in order that they might better help their children to reach their full potential.

### **Lifestart Foundation Mission**

The Lifestart Foundation's mission is to support and facilitate the delivery of Lifestart programmes in order that all children can enjoy their childhood, develop their full potential through play and interaction, have an equal chance within the education system and enjoy a healthy lifestyle.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Foundation Staff would like to thank the Foundation's Board of Directors/Lifestart Council -

**Patrick Durkan, Chairperson & Treasurer**  
**Maura Ward, Vice Chairperson**  
**Gemma Duffy, Secretary**  
**Neil Barr**  
**Mairead Wrynn**  
**Michael McMonagle**

Council Associate Members representing the Lifestart National Office Board of Directors  
**Mary McGowan**  
**Des Keaney**

- for their steadfast voluntary commitment and support throughout the year.

## **CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD**

The past year has been arduous. I commend my Foundation colleagues for their time, wisdom and stalwart service throughout. We are poorly resourced financially, relative to many charitable organisations. However, we have been richly serviced by our excellent staff whose enthusiasm, dedication and perseverance has helped Lifestart immeasurably. Pauline, as Executive, has led the team strongly and purposefully.

The achievement of the Lifestart Mission is enhanced by the significant input of the National Office Board and staff. The collective efforts are all needed to ensure progress. This entails assiduous effort at developing practical relationships with relevant agencies to influence policies and provide working solutions that make a better life for our children.

The Foundation gratefully acknowledges the financial and strategic support of our funders. Funding is essential for survival and the competition for funding is fierce. Our quality delivery provision must be differentiated from those perceived as competing providers when service decisions are being made.

Regrettably, two of our Directors are resigning this year. Neill Barr, our previous Chairperson, has unstintingly served the Lifestart cause for twenty years. Gemma Duffy has given excellent service to the Foundation during her tenure. I thank both for their invaluable service in fulfilling the Lifestart Mission.

Twenty-one years on, through the efforts of lots of people in many places, Lifestart has endured and flourished. With renewed vigour and fresh focus, we apply ourselves to Lifestart's cause.

**PATRICK DURKAN**

## Introduction

The **Lifestart Foundation** is an all-Ireland charitable body working to produce better child development outcomes by educating parents on how young children develop and learn in order that they might better help their children to reach their full potential. Educational research has consistently demonstrated that the foundations for learning are established in the earliest months and years of life and that it is in early life that children acquire the competence and coping skills that affect their life trajectories. The evidence suggests that good parenting can have important influence on a child's physical, intellectual, psychological and social well-being reduces the adverse effects of economic and social disadvantage and improves child development outcomes, school readiness and life prospects. Efforts to give every child the best start in life, therefore, need to begin in these early years, ideally at birth and ideally in the home - the primary environment for early learning and development. The Lifestart programme – the **Growing Child** – provides parents with information together with practical learning activity on child development not normally available to them but available to health and other professionals working with children or providing children's services.

Lifestart provision is organised and managed through local community-based projects and through outreach provision. The programme is delivered by trained family visitors in the parent's own home. Projects are affiliated and contracted to the Foundation which quality assures programme delivery and trains project staff. The Foundation currently has 19 affiliated projects (17 in Ireland, one in Macedonia and one in Zambia), collectively delivering Lifestart services to the parents of more than 13,000 children. The Foundation is the licence holder of the Growing Child and is an Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) accreditation Centre for Lifestart staff-training.

The Foundation is also a national Open College Network (OCN) accreditation centre for group/centre-based accredited training for parents. This programme was developed by the Foundation to run in addition to the home-based parenting programme. Some projects offer the home-based and the accredited parent training programmes as well as other centre-based services, including in some instances, childcare services. The Foundation's mission is:

*to support and facilitate the delivery of Lifestart programmes in order that all children can enjoy their childhood, develop their full potential through play and interaction, have an equal chance within the education system and enjoy a healthy lifestyle.*

The main responsibilities of the Foundation are:

- To act as the brand copyright/franchise holder of Lifestart programmes and to protect the copyright materials as required by the Growing Child publishers
- To develop Lifestart curricula
- To quality assure programme content and delivery
- To ensure that programme staff are trained and accredited
- To determine strategic direction and devise, oversee and monitor the implementation of Lifestart strategic plans
- To develop, implement and monitor organisational policies and accountability and reporting systems and procedures
- To develop and implement a funding strategy aimed at organisational sustainability
- To manage the longitudinal evaluation of the impact of the Lifestart home-based programme
- To promote and market the Lifestart brand
- To inform and influence government policy
- To enter into contractual relations with relevant government bodies and other NGOs

Within this context the key areas of work undertaken throughout the year related to:

- The re-design of the longitudinal evaluation
- The Lifestart strategy for modernisation, growth and development
- Rationalisation and standardisation

- Cross-border work
- Staff training and accreditation
- Lifestart marketing, publicity and networking
- Organisational Sustainability
- Project support

## **Longitudinal Evaluation**

In collaboration with the research team at the Childcare Research Institute (CCRI) at Queen's University and with Michael Little at the Dartington Social Research Unit, the Foundation this year finalised the evaluation research design and protocol and recruited members to the project expert advisory panel. The first meeting of the advisory panel will take place in mid October 2007, when final arrangements for the implementation of the experimental research methodology will be agreed and the recruitment of parents to the evaluative study will begin. The CCRI research team has also completed the Lifestart service manual.

The Council welcomes this opportunity to thank the Institute of Child Care Research, the Dartington Social Research Unit, Atlantic Philanthropies and Lifestart Staff for their work on and commitment to the longitudinal evaluation process.

## **Modernisation Strategy**

The Lifestart strategy for modernisation, growth and development aims to expand delivery of Lifestart programmes in response to identified need. To this end the Foundation prepared and submitted to Atlantic Philanthropies in June 2007 a 6-year development strategy linked to the revised longitudinal evaluation. The objectives of the strategy are:

- to sustain and expand programme delivery throughout Ireland
- to inform, support and better target the growth in provision by gathering evidence on need and demand for the Lifestart programme and service in Ireland
- to identify obstacles to growth and to develop strategies for addressing those obstacles



- to generate highly reliable empirical evidence of programme effectiveness, with a view to the consolidation and mainstreaming of the Lifestart programme and service within government funded family and children's services in Ireland.

It is the ambition of the Lifestart Council to be in a position by 2015 to deliver Lifestart programmes to the families of at least 1 in every 8 new born Irish children, in a pattern of provision which meets local need, which provides value for money and which makes a significant and lasting contribution to improved child development outcomes in Ireland. To achieve this objective the Foundation has been seeking investment funding to (1) Implement the new longitudinal evaluation methodology (2) Sustain the Lifestart Foundation and the employment of core staff through the course of the evaluative study and (3) Strengthen the Foundation's capacity to undertake crucial development work.

The Foundation has continued to work closely with the **Lifestart National Office** Board of Directors and staff and with project co-ordinators to further the Lifestart modernisation agenda.

### **ILM Training 2006-2007**

On March 26<sup>th</sup> 07 the Foundation successfully concluded another cycle of ILM staff training. Mr Tom Wylie, who is the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) External Verifier assigned to Lifestart, visited the Foundation Office and carried out the External Verification procedure at the end of April 07. The Graduation Ceremony took place in the Verbal Arts Centre, on Friday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2007

The Institute of Leadership and Management has recently introduced a unit based system of accreditation. This change necessitated the attendance at training days by the Training Manager and the revision of learning materials associated with Lifestart ILM Courses. This process is underway and will be completed early in October 07. In April this year (07) our Accreditation as an ILM Centre came up for renewal.

This necessitated that ILM carry out a thorough audit of our practice and procedures before a further four year extension as an Accredited ILM Centre could be granted to us. Mr Mike Crothers, the ILM Lead National Manager for Ireland, visited the Foundation Office and carried out a thorough audit of our practice and procedures. We are happy to report that the audit showed that our practice and procedures were of high quality and our Accreditation as an ILM Centre is extended for a further four years to 2011.



**Successful ILM/Lifestart Graduates June 2007**

### **OCN/Lifestart Parenting Programme – Phase 3**

As well as being an ILM Accredited Centre we are also Accredited with the Open College Network for the delivery of our Parenting Programme (Phase 3). Because of structural changes happening with OCN it became necessary that they carry out a Quality Review of all Centres offering OCN accredited courses. We had a visit from Mr Patrick Kearney, OCN Quality Reviewer, at the end of January 07. He carried out an in-depth audit of our practice and procedures regarding OCN accreditation. Our practice and procedures were found to be of a high standard and we were granted an extension of our OCN Centre Accreditation for the next year. Runs of the Parenting Programme continue to be successfully delivered at various Lifestart project locations.

## **National Office Training Plans**

With the recent appointment of a Training Officer within the National Office we are now able to deliver ILM and OCN courses to projects in the Republic of Ireland who are in a position to avail of this training. This planning is ongoing and once the necessary training in ILM and OCN procedures and practice is done then accredited training will be rolled out.

## **Big Lottery Funding**

We are very grateful to the Big Lottery for the on-going funding which enables us to continue to develop our Training and Accreditation plans. Without this funding it would have been very difficult to achieve the present high standard of accredited training.

## **Cross-border Work**

The 3-year Cross-border project funded under Priority 2 Measure 1 of the Interreg IIIA programme ended in May 2007. The project external evaluation conducted in June found that:

*‘the Cross Border Policy (met), and in many instances exceeded, the required outputs for the project as established by the INTERREG Programme. In doing so, the promoters have achieved not only the required outputs but also their desired outputs such as the strengthening of the Lifestart programme and the highlighting of Early Years development issues throughout the island. The project has been especially successful in supporting local communities to work together for the betterment of parents and children, in building capacity to influence policy development and implementation, and in establishing networking opportunities across Northern Ireland and the Cross Border region’.*

The Council wishes to take this opportunity to thank the funders of the cross-border project for their support and to congratulate the National Office and the project worker on their success. The Council recognises that this work has made a valuable contribution to the development of Lifestart in Ireland.

## **Lifestart marketing, publicity and networking**

The Lifestart Foundation has continued to work to promote the Lifestart brand among parenting, family support and children’s services providers

and funders. Foundation staff earlier this year prepared a Lifestart Service Summary document which was distributed to all key stakeholders. The Foundation also continues to distribute the 'Growing Together' and 'Growing Parent' newsletters both of which have generated very positive feedback and which have helped to raise the profile of the Lifestart brand.

Staff members of the Foundation and the National Office have represented Lifestart at a number of important policy and research conferences and two Foundation staff members attended a meeting/lunch organised by Mark Durkan, MLA, with President Mary McAleese and Dr Martin McAleese at Áras An Uachtaráin earlier this month.



**Paul Gallagher, President Mary McAleese and Dr Martin McAleese, Mark Durkan MLA, Pauline McClenaghan and Loreto Douglas at Áras An Uachtaráin**

The Foundation Office is a member of:

- Western Trust Family Support Strategy Group
- NI Parenting Forum (Strategic Advisory Group Member)
- Early Years Strategic Alliance
- Children in Northern Ireland
- National Children's Bureau
- Early Years Forum
- Edenballymore SureStart (Management Committee Member)
- Waterside SureStart (Management Committee Member)
- Rural Community Network
- North West Community Network
- Northern Council for Voluntary Action

The National Office is represented on the:

- Irish Childcare Policy Network
- The Children's Rights Alliance
- The National Women's Council of Ireland
- The Wheel

Lifestart projects also continue to promote the Lifestart product and service at the local and regional levels.

## **Sustainability/Financing**

Financial security and organisational sustainability are an abiding issue for the Foundation, the National Office and for Lifestart projects. The provision of children and family services has been transformed in recent years and is now more complex and demanding. The emergence of parenting education and other family support initiatives has brought both new challenges and opportunities for Lifestart. In this light the Foundation has continued to pursue funding and contractual opportunities.

The Foundation is very grateful for the funding it has received to support its activities over the last year and, on behalf of all the members of the Lifestart Foundation, the Council express gratitude to:

- The Big Lottery
- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (NI)
- The Western Area Trust
- Sisters of Mercy
- The Atlantic Philanthropies

## **Lifestart Projects**

Throughout the year the Foundation and the National Office have continued to provide support to Lifestart Projects. Existing Lifestart projects are:

Ballymun Early Years Project Ltd	Lifestart Mid Ards
Carlow Parents' Support	Lifestart Newtowncunningham
Drogheda Lifestart	Lifestart Strabane District
Dunluce Family Centre Ltd. Derry	Mulhuddart Lifestart Dublin
Kilkenny Parents' Support	Offaly/Kildare Lifestart
Leitrim Lifestart	Sligo Family Support Ltd.
Lifestart Cherry Orchard Dublin	Tir Boghaine Lifestart Donegal
Lifestart Lifford/Letterkenny	Westville Family Resource Centre Enniskillen
Lifestart Limavady	Lifestart Macedonia
Lifestart Development Mazabuka Ltd	

The 17 projects in Ireland employ 116 staff and serve 2,695 families and 3,134 children. The Macedonian project has 60 staff and provides Lifestart

services through 50 centres to the families of 9,873 children and the Zambian project employs 11 staff and delivers the Lifestart programme in 13 compounds to 503 families and 590 children. Project staffing and contact details are contained in Annex 1.



**Official Opening of new premises Lifestart Mid Ards October 2006**

Two Lifestart projects in Northern Ireland closed in the course of the year - Lifestart Downpatrick, operating under licence to Bryson House, and the Templemore Early Years Centre Derry. The Downpatrick closure was the result of staffing difficulties but it is hoped that families in the Downpatrick area will soon be receiving the Lifestart programme again through the Mid-Ards project. The closure of the Templemore Early Years Centre was a consequence of funding difficulties and delays.

This was one of the Foundation's flagship projects and its closure testifies to the importance of building up organisational sustainability and of exploring different forms of programme delivery. The Foundation, through its pilot outreach scheme, was able to take up the Templemore Centre's SureStart contract and to re-employ two of its family visitors.

The Council wishes to thank the management committee and staff of the Templemore project for their stoic efforts to provide and promote the Lifestart service over a period of many years.

## Overseas Projects

**Lifestart Macedonia** continues to develop apace, extending Lifestart programme provision through its many area based centres. It is now recognised as a very important provider of children and family support services which are making a very important contribution to improving child development outcomes and life chances in Macedonia. The more recently established Zamiban project has also this year experienced new growth. **Lifestart Development Mazabuka Limited** is running very smoothly due to the fact that the Family Visitors are now very much at home with all the material for the programme. The Project Coordinator and Administrator are likewise very familiar with all materials. All the staff have been able to read up supplementary materials and make it their own. Project staff send their thanks to the Foundation for **The Growing Parent** newsletter which they found very helpful and challenging.

During the year the project began delivering Lifestart services in a new Compound named Changa-Changa. This compound is about 2 Km from the Lifestart office. Because of the distance staff felt that too much time would be required to cycle there and back so Namaamba, the Administrator, is now putting her newly acquired skills in driving into effect and she drives the team there and back twice a week. Changa-Changa compound is on the outskirts of Mazabuka town giving residents more space and enabling them to cultivate their gardens. As a result they are able to sell their produce and earn some money – a great opportunity for them as the unemployment rate in this area is 90%.

The parents welcome the programme and see it as an opportunity for their children's future. The Cluster Meetings for Changa-Changa are well attended. The nearby community school, St. Edmunds, has very kindly given permission to use their premises for Lifestart meetings. At present there are 58 children and 48 families on the programme. So far the project has only enrolled 0- 3 yrs in Changa-Changa. The Family Visitors in the

compound have, as they have done in the Showground Compound, introduced children's meetings once a week where the children do activities e.g. outdoor games/songs/movements/dance. Indoors they do shape sorting, threading and stacking rings etc. At the children's meetings the project takes 3 – 6 yr olds and meetings usually involve about 100 children. The attendance is always encouraging and the children love it, they know the time table and are waiting in anticipation for their meeting.



Children gathering for a Lifestart children's meeting

The number of compounds now being serviced by Lifestart Development Mazabuka is 13. The total number of children at August end was 590 and the number of families 503. The project still experiences sickness and death and children having to leave the programme as they move to their extended families outside Mazabuka. So far this year the project has lost four children.

The main work for the Project Manager this past year has been finalizing the plans for the **Early Childhood Centre**.

## ANNEXE 1

<p><b>Lifestart Foundation</b> 11a Bishop Street Londonderry/Derry BT48 6PL Tel: 02871 365 363 Fax: 02871 365 334 Email: <a href="mailto:foundation@lifestart01.fsnet.co.uk">foundation@lifestart01.fsnet.co.uk</a></p> <p>Chair: Patrick Durkan Executive Director: Pauline McClenaghan Training &amp; Accreditation Manager: Matt Mulroe Administrator: Loreto Douglas Admin. Assistant: Abby Woolsey Finance Officer: Sean O' Callaghan Family Visitors: Priscilla Buchanan Genny Marilley</p>	<p><b>Lifestart National Office</b> Church Street Sligo Tel: (071) 9151114 / 915116 Fax: (071) 9155543 Email: <a href="mailto:lifestart@eircom.net">lifestart@eircom.net</a></p> <p>Chair: Tom Lavin</p> <p>National Officer: Therese O'Rourke</p> <p>Training &amp; Promotional Officer: Orla Tuohy</p> <p>Administrators: Teresa McGuinness Mary Sayers</p>	<p><b>Ailigh Family Centre Ltd</b> <b>Lifestart Newtowncunningham</b> Main Street Newtowncunningham Co Donegal Tel: (074) 9156644 Fax: (074) 9156645 Email: <a href="mailto:lifestartnewtowncunningham@eircom.net">lifestartnewtowncunningham@eircom.net</a></p> <p>Chair: Teresa McGee Manager: Mary Walker Callaghan Administrator: Geraldine Holmes Family Visitors: Christine Crossan Carol Frize Helga Tinneny Maura McGettigan Ita Downey Ann Toner Ann Houston Nora Browne</p>
<p><b>Ballymun Early Years Project Ltd</b> 10 Shangan Avenue Ballymun Dublin 9 Tel: (01) 8622227 Fax: (01) 8622227 Email <a href="mailto:ballymunlifestart@eircom.net">ballymunlifestart@eircom.net</a></p> <p>Chair: Jacqui Caulfield Co-ordinator: Siobhan Herbert Administrator: Madeline McLoughlin Family Visitors: Helen Blake Kathleen Cummins Mary Fitzpatrick Elaine O'Connell</p> <p>Project Support Worker: Donnette Keating</p>	<p><b>Carlow/Kilkenny Parent Support Programme</b> Carlow Parents' Support Programme Community Care Athy Road, Carlow Tel: Carlow (059) 9136545 Email: <a href="mailto:maura.ohalloran@maila.hse.ie">maura.ohalloran@maila.hse.ie</a></p> <p>Kilkenny Parent's Support Programme Health Service Executive James' Green, Kilkenny Tel: Kilkenny (056) 7784750 Fax: Kilkenny (056) 7761472 Email: <a href="mailto:marieb.hayes@maila.hse.ie">marieb.hayes@maila.hse.ie</a></p> <p>Chair: Marie Kennedy Co-ordinators: Maura O' Halloran and Mairead Julian Family Visitors: Elizabeth Carley Elizabeth Byrne Margaret Brophy Margaret Lacey Dolores Rochford</p>	<p><b>Lifestart Cherry Orchard</b> 162 Cherry Orchard Avenue Ballyfermot Dublin 10 Tel: (01) 6206884 Fax: (01) 6206884 Email: <a href="mailto:lifestartcherryorchard162@eircom.net">lifestartcherryorchard162@eircom.net</a></p> <p>Chair: Henry Harding Co-ordinator: David Fleming Family Visitors: Serena Murray Pamela Maher Sally Flynn Sharon Hynds Tracey Quinn Anne Marie O'Connor</p> <p>Promoter/Phase 3 : Ann McKenna</p>
<p><b>Drogheda Lifestart</b> Lifestyle Centre Ballsgrove Drogheda, Co Louth Tel: (041) 9842078 Fax: (041) 9846011 Email: <a href="mailto:droghedalifestart@eircom.net">droghedalifestart@eircom.net</a></p> <p>Chair: Mairead Meade Co-ordinator: Carol Harkin</p> <p>Family Visitors: Michelle Dillon</p> <p>Project Worker: Ciara Finan</p>	<p><b>Dunluce Family Centre Ltd</b> 13 Dunluce Court Ballymagroarty Derry BT48 0PA Tel: 02871 269 833 Fax: 02871 260 233 Email: <a href="mailto:lifestart@bhmz.fsnet.co.uk">lifestart@bhmz.fsnet.co.uk</a></p> <p>Chair: Paul McLaughlin Manager: Margaret McCann Administrator: Jennifer McCollum Family Visitors: Aisling Johnston-McCarter Marie McCollum Caoimhe Holmes Samantha Guille</p>	<p><b>Leitrim Lifestart</b> The Glens Centre Manorhamilton Co Leitrim Tel: (071) 9856660 Email: <a href="mailto:leitrimlifestart@eircom.net">leitrimlifestart@eircom.net</a></p> <p>Chair: Des Keaney</p> <p>Co-ordinator: Trish Martyn</p> <p>Family Visitors: Anna McTernan Eileen Philbin Kathleen O'Brien</p>



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