

# THE BLUE BOX CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY CENTRE



## Life-changing intervention through the arts

There are children within the community who struggle with exposure to early childhood trauma whether that be abuse, home life that is lacking in nurture, or exposure to violence. Thanks in part to support from The Ireland Funds, Blue Box Creative Arts Therapy Centre is the first program of its kind in Europe to offer creative arts psychotherapy both in their centre and in select schools. Through play therapy, music therapy, art therapy, drama, dance, and movement therapies with trained and accredited therapists, the Centre tackles its mission to help the most marginalized and disadvantaged children progress and grow. Here, Bernadette Kenny, CEO of The Blue Box Creative Arts Therapy Centre, shares her thanks with you, The Ireland Funds donors, for making this vital work possible.



**There are hundreds of children throughout Ireland trapped in a world of hurt and silence whose voices are not being heard.**

**But there is hope for them.**

The Blue Box is a ground-breaking project that gives these children a voice, many for the first time. It's the only project of its kind in Ireland. It provides the help these children desperately need by creating a safe haven through Creative Arts Therapies (Play, Music, Art, Dance/Drama therapy). This speaks to the individual child in ways they understand and already use in everyday life, because play is the first language of every child.

Trauma deprives a child of life's possibilities. Many of our children suffer trauma in the home environment, which is traditionally a place of safety for Irish children. What is normally safe for most children is not for many of the children we support. This has created a need for Blue Box services.

The Ireland Funds' support has enabled Blue Box to offer more services to the children who are referred for Creative Arts Therapy work from the most deprived areas of Limerick.

This makes a remarkable difference to a child's therapy experience. It can mean that a child (or child and parent) can have the maximum amount of service in the academic year. This is significant in a child's healing process by helping them build a more secure relationship with the Therapist that supports their ability to process and integrate their learned experience.

To be able to offer more Blue Box services to a school that is struggling to meet the emotional and psychological needs of disadvantaged children when their role is to educate, is seen by Principals as a huge support.

Children who have been traumatized often cannot learn. Neuroscience now validates what people in Education and Therapy have known, that there is an essential need for a child to receive the kind of services Blue Box Creative Arts Therapies offer. In order for children to be fully engaged and have equal opportunity in school, home life and society, there need to be trauma-informed Intervention therapies like Blue Box.

I would like to sincerely thank The Ireland Funds and in particular thank the Donors for their foresight and compassionate action and with a spirit of great generosity in supporting and investing in this life-changing intervention for children and the future generations of Ireland.

*In Gratitude,  
Bernadette Kenny  
CEO of The Blue Box Creative Arts Therapy Centre*



## What Makes Blue Box Unique?

The Blue Box is the only charity in Ireland and Europe that has dedicated its resources to child psychotherapy with family support. Since 1997, The Blue Box has worked with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and youth in Limerick, using Creative Arts Therapy as a primary intervention response in over 16 DEIS (disadvantaged) schools, as well as with social services referrals.

## It is the only charity to offer:

- Direct treatment through Creative Arts Therapy to children/youth in need of services
- A complete and comprehensive evaluation framework that supports the child, the family/school and the Therapist in a professional, transparent, responsive and dynamic structure.
- Affordable, adaptive and accessible services through the school environment.

## The Blue Box Presence in Schools supported by The Ireland Funds:

- Reaches families that cannot avail of outside services and are therefore marginalized and are high priority
- Supports teachers and principals to be more effective in their mission of education
- Has designed an evaluative framework that holds accountability to the service users and stakeholders
- Is the first organization to develop Creative Arts Therapy services in Ireland for children in schools and social work



Thanks to the Donors of The Ireland Funds, Blue Box  
was able to offer **141 sessions** overall  
to **56 children** in 2017/18.

*"I feel happier now. I can stand up to my sister and I don't cry anymore when I can't see my Mum in the house. I could talk about my feelings in the sessions and I feel stronger."* - **Client, 9 years old**

*"I would describe some children just walking around with a clenched fist in their chest. Blue Box unlocks something in them that otherwise would just be frustratingly locked. Because of trauma they have experienced, they can never open, they can never really discover who they are, they can never reach their full potential. But Blue Box gives them the opportunity to tap into that potential to be their full self."* - **Principal**

*"I can talk to my Blue Box music therapist. I'm listened to and my therapist understands me—she gets me."* - **Client, 14 years old**



## The Transformation of **Clodagh** Age 9\*

Clodagh was often a witness to domestic violence and substance misuse in her unstable home-life. She came to Blue Box excessively anxious and fearful. Subject to unregulated emotions and angry outbursts she was hyper-vigilant and challenged in engaging in play and developing trust.

Slowly, she became engaged in art-making and became more expressive as sessions progressed. Her creative engagement expressed her family trauma and lack of security and stability. Clodagh began to develop trust for her therapist and to incorporate more varied themes. After ongoing therapy with Blue Box, Clodagh now has developed a sense of security and began to explore referral issues symbolically with her therapist. Today she has decreased her angry outbursts, is less nervous and timid and regularly demonstrates happiness and confidence

*\* (names have been changed)*