



# Atlantic Social Lab

**Newsletter - May 2020**

**Presenting Some of Cork's Social Enterprises**

We are an EU funded project which promotes the use of social innovation to address key societal challenges. The project involves 9 partners from across the UK, Spain, Portugal, France and Ireland. Cork City Council is the Irish partner and in Cork we are focused on using social innovation to address issues being faced by social enterprises and look at innovative ways of stimulating civic engagement in the city.

In this edition of our Atlantic Social Lab newsletter we are presenting some of Cork's Social Enterprises and looking at their aims and activities as well as their beneficiaries and how they are responding to the current Covid 19 crisis.

**Active Connections**



Who you are?

Raymond Burke, founder of Active Connections, Ray is an outdoor and social care professional, who saw that lots of young people he was working with did not fit into the clinical based therapeutic supports. Ray spent time in the USA working in Adventure Therapy and wanted to supply this as an option for young people experiencing emotional/behavioural difficulties.

What is your Social Enterprises mission statement?

Active Connections aims to 'Transform Lives Through Adventure', our mission is to make Adventure Therapy as an option for everyone experiencing emotional/behavioural difficulties across Ireland

What does your social enterprise do?

We have three main programs

'New Trails' is our high support 1:1 service which uses adventure therapy to support young people at risk, each week we support 35-40 young people who would be deemed high risk. This service helps young people to overcome adversity, build resilience, and gain confidence. This service is typically 1 or 2 days a week, for on average for 26 weeks. We will also provide these young people 48 hour breakaways to help them avoid placement breakdown, these breakaways give the young person and their families/foster families time to let the pressures of life off.

'Ember Program' is a high support activity service for young people with additional needs. We support groups of young people with additional needs, this program group based and typically each participant has their own worker. We operate in the outdoors all year round and give these young people the opportunity to engage in activities they would not be able to engage with normally. This also gives families an additional out of the home support for their young person. In our last session one mom commented that it was the first time she saw her son smile in 2020.

'Active Connections Professional' Transforming Team Through Adventure, Team Building with a Social Impact

We use our brief solution focused coaching methodology to help teams explore their challenges in dynamic environments guided by our staff. During these programs we help

teams develop an alternative way to look at their aims and ways to get their results effectively. Our professional programs are designed for each team individually, some teams want a full on challenge based events, others are built around wellbeing inside and out of the office. All profits from this program goes directly to our not-for-profit service with young people.

Who are the beneficiaries?

Our primary beneficiaries are young people and their families. Daniel was a young man we supported for 30 weeks, when we first met him, he was spiralling out of control. He was kicked out of school, self harming weekly and social work were acting to move him out of home. We supported him and his family twice a week, we helped him explore his current life and where that was going, we helped him 'find his light'. He is now back in school full time, social work closed the case and most importantly he is happy.

In our Ember program we support young people 10-16 that have additional needs (autism/down syndrome etc...)

What is your social impact?

In 2019 we supported 179 young people, 70 of these young people were at extreme risk of placement breakdown (getting kicked out or removed from home)

90% of all people responding to your end of program evaluations stated that our intervention was very important to their lives/their improvement

Financially by diverting young people away from residential care we are saving the state up to 260,000 euro per person per year.

How is your social enterprise impacted by the current Coronavirus crisis?

Like many companies Covid 19 has impacted our service greatly.

All our Ember (additional need) Programs and For Professional Programs have been postponed.

We are supporting 25-30 young people via online and phone services, as we are front line social care we can travel to the very at risk young people to support them. The pressures young people are describing are extremely worrying as the isolation persists and we for see that more and more young people's wellbeing will drop and the longer term impacts will be very hard to redirect.

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## **Cork Counselling Services**

Who you are?

We are Cork Counselling Services

What is your Social Enterprises mission statement?

We are committed to providing counselling and psychotherapy to the highest ethical and professional standards to all members of society regardless of financial means, religious beliefs, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or educational background.

What does your social enterprise do?

We offer counselling to individuals and couples to assist in the healing of emotional pain, distress and trauma. We also offer crisis management for people in moments of overwhelm. We also offer professional counselling training to degree level, accredited by Coventry University and Irish Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (IACP)

Who are the beneficiaries?

We are a community service for Cork City, County and surrounding areas.

What is your social impact?

In 2019 Cork Counselling Services: Saw 378 clients in total regardless of background or ability to pay, offering 3268 hours of professional one-to-one counselling. And our training institute ran programmes at Certificate, Diploma and Degree level for just under 100 students in total.

How is your social enterprise impacted by the current Coronavirus crisis?

We have moved from face-to-face counselling on a sliding-scale basis to phone counselling on a donation basis.

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**Ballyphehane Community Association**



Who are you?

The Ballyphehane Community Association operates and maintains a Community Centre in the heart of the Ballyphehane community, located within the grounds of a community park with ample off-street parking. From its humble beginnings fifty years ago the Ballyphehane Community Centre has grown to become an integral part of the community for all age groups.

What do you do?

Employing a staff of 15, with a volunteer staff of approximately 35, the Ballyphehane Community Association offers a wide and diverse range of services through the community

centre. These include Meals on Wheels, an adult day care centre, Bingo twice a week, a community café, a private gym, a large hall and meeting room facilities. Over 500 people visit the centre on a weekly basis and up to 50 meals are delivered daily in the Ballypnehane and Turners Cross areas.

Who are your beneficiaries?

The Ballypnehane Community Association plays an important role in the local community by enhancing the quality of life of the local population by delivering services that help reduce social isolation, low self-esteem, depression and poor health. It partners with the local HSE Community Work Department, local nurses, the HSA, and the Ballypnehane – Togher Community Development Project in the delivery of day care facilities and disability accessible transport, and the provision of high-quality sport and social facilities in the area.

What is your social impact?

Over the past number of year, the team has supported a variety of local groups including Togher Meals on Wheels, Ballypnehane Togher CDP, Kilreen Celtic, Fr Matthew Basketball, Ballypnehane GAA, Cork Filipino Basketball, Footdreams School of Dance, Foróige, Irish Dancing, Ballypnehane Men's Shed, Muintir Na Tire, Munster Senior League, Network Bowls, and Rebel Wheeler Basketball.

The Ballypnehane Community Association is an excellent resource for providing families with easy access to events, sporting activities, and general information about the community. It offers the opportunity to stay connected to what's happening in your community. It helps families to connect with other families and develop rich friendships as a result.

How is your social enterprise impacted by the current Coronavirus crisis?

The Community Centre is now closed as a result of the current COVID-19 crisis and all services are currently unavailable. However, we have activated contingency plans to continue operating the vital Meals on Wheels service. Meals are now sourced externally, but are still delivered 3 times a week (covering the full week) for those most vulnerable in our community. This could not be possible without our dedicated team of voluntary drivers.

For more information visit [www.ballypnehanecommunity.com](http://www.ballypnehanecommunity.com)

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## Green Step



Who you are?

I'm Melanie, founder of the Green Step. I have a degree in Zoology and a background in Buddhism. I facilitate the Work that Reconnects (Active Hope workshops) to support people emotionally and spiritually as they face the truth and reality of the climate and biodiversity challenge we are currently facing. I am also the host of the [Green Step podcast](#) which has been ongoing since 2018.



What is your Social Enterprises mission statement?

The Green Step: Stepping towards our sustainable future with resilient, connected communities where no-being is left behind.

What does your social enterprise do?

The Green Step is a start up consortium of environmental and community resilience educators. Through the Green Step educators offer essential skills needed to tackle the climate and biodiversity emergency to communities, businesses and schools to facilitate a just transition to a low carbon, circular economy. The Green Step includes on-line workshops as well as collaborative events on topics including foraging, the work that reconnects, empathy circles, permaculture, biodiversity enhancement, zero waste living, sustainable development goals education and more.

Who are the beneficiaries?

The primary beneficiaries in the Green Step are our educators with the second beneficiaries being the people they work with in our communities, schools and businesses. We know that a supportive workplace and culture can empower educators to work in ways and with people that promote good self-esteem, healthy work/life balance and emotional support as they fight to tackle the biodiversity and climate crisis. The challenge our world is facing right now will take an enormous sustained effort from all members of society. It is crucial that the people facilitating this are happy, healthy and living in a sustainable way. The Green Step offers this emotional, physical and spiritual support to our educators allowing them to facilitate lasting, sustained actions within the communities in which they work both on- and off-line.

What is your social impact?

We are helping people in many different parts of our society make the step by step changes needed to tackle the climate and biodiversity emergency. We are teaching people about the work that reconnects, the sustainable development goals, foraging, communication techniques, mindful meditation and lots more tools and techniques that help people and communities become more resilient and connected as we transition to a carbon free circular economy.

How is your social enterprise impacted by the current Coronavirus crisis?

The work of the Green Step is becoming more necessary in the light of coronavirus and while our spaces have been moved online we are offering more support to people as we invite people to imagine the future they would like to create going forward. We know we are not going back to normal so we are asking ourselves and our clients what do we want to co-create instead? Our 'Nourishment in a Time of Crisis' spaces are on every Sunday from 2-4pm on Zoom where everyone is welcome to join us. More details can be found on our social media platforms FB/insta @[thegreenstep.ie](https://www.thegreenstep.ie).

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### Churchfield Community Trust



Who you are?

Churchfield Community Trust (CCT) is an organisation which believes that all people should have the opportunity and supportive environment to overcome challenges around alcohol, substance misuse and offending behaviour.

What is your mission?

We are a community-based organisation located on the Northside of Cork City. We respond to a very specific group of young people who need intensive support, therapeutic interventions, stability and acceptance, to achieve sustainable change at a crucial time in their lives. Our practice is grounded in the principles of the person-centred Servol Model:

- Maintaining a philosophy of ignorance, in that we never assume that we know the needs of the clients we are trying to help.
- Listening attentively so that we become more informed of their needs.

Our practice is always mindful of these core values:

What does your social enterprise do?

We collaborate with key statutory and voluntary agencies to: establish safer communities through reduction of recidivism; promote re- integration of offenders; provide key strategic addiction interventions; create sustainable employment opportunities and develop pathways to adult education and training. Our Garden Café initiative provides training and mentoring in a live Café environment to men and women who are interested in progressing to employment in the catering industry. Mentoring and certified training is delivered to employees who engage as part of the Garden Café initiative. Our Compass Crafts Initiative: Our carpentry team, based at Knockfree Avenue Workshop, design and produce Garden Furniture, Playpark items and Creche Furniture. Several significant orders were completed throughout 2019. Trainees are trained and mentored under the supervision of the Workshop Manager and carpentry Support Worker in a live workshop environment focusing on pre-apprenticeship skills. Our Growing Initiative: Our Horticulture team continues to grow and supply, Elbow Lane Restaurant and our own Garden Café with fresh produce such as salad leaves, seasonal vegetables and fresh herbs.

Who are your beneficiaries?

- Young people aged 18 – 35 years
- Ex -offenders
- All having substance misuse and/ or alcohol dependency / addictions

What is your social impact?

Special category community employment and continuing adult education initiatives provide a platform for progression to sustainable employment and re-integration within communities of origin for our participants. CCT works collaboratively with people on Special Category substance Misuse Community Employment and TUS through the provision of personal, vocational and educational supports. During 2019 our organisation engaged with 316 participants through several interventions while 27 participants were employed through special category community employment and 7 participants were employed through a Tus

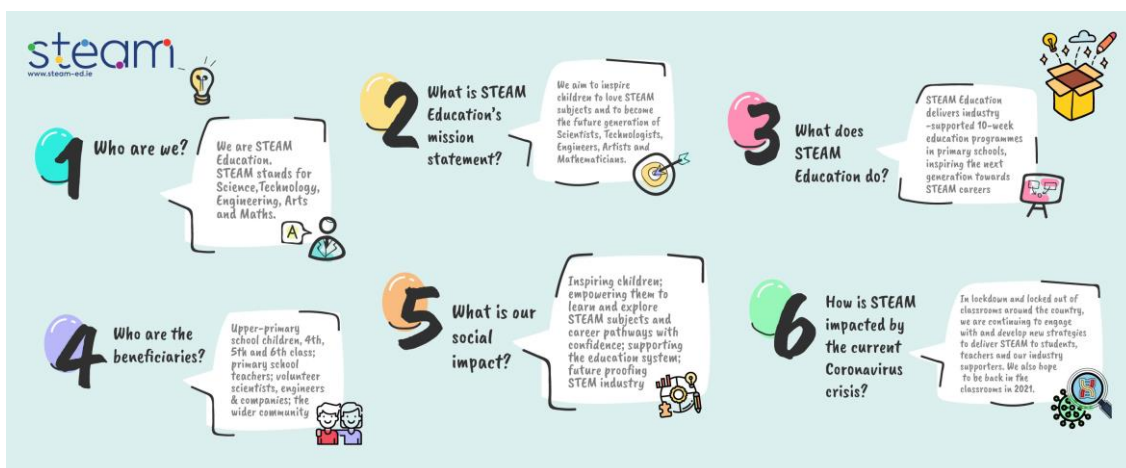
initiative. In 2019 we provided a diverse range of services in areas such as Outreach, Therapeutic Supports, Education and Employment.

How is your social enterprise impacted by the current Coronavirus crisis?

Churchfield Community Trust remains operational in the context of brief and crisis intervention while our core team have adapted to the current challenging circumstances and are collaborating as part of an inter-agency community response re Covid - 19.

All social enterprise activities have ceased in the interim however the organisation is currently planning for the resumption of activities as per public health advice.

## STEAM Education



## WHY STEAM MATTERS & JOINING THE TRACK TO SUCCESS

### THE 'STEAM' TRAIN

During these extraordinary times, the world is very clearly looking to the world of **Science** in the hopes of fast-tracking a vaccine for COVID-19; to the world of **Technology** to keep us all connected; to the world of **Engineering** to design and deliver personal protective equipment that will keep our front-line workers safe; to **Mathematics** as we all strive to flatten the curve; and last, but by no means least, to the **Arts** - which keep us engaged,

entertained and provide solace, connection and hope during the lock-down.

## **CORK CARRIAGES**

In Cork we have seen how quickly and innovatively a community can and will respond in a time of crisis, and more particularly we have seen an unprecedented level of volunteering and engagement from STEM and Arts amateurs and professionals alike. Children and adults of all ages and from all sectors with STEAM skills have rallied as never before to support the call for help out of this crisis.

From designing and delivering vital personal protective equipment, to organising the logistics of feeding healthcare staff and people in need, to collaborating in research and development for innovative vaccines, treatments and supporting technologies, the necessity, use, and benefits of STEAM skills are evident to the global population now even more than before.

In addition, in response to the school closures and restricted movements there has been a surge of online engagement in educational resources and challenges for children and families, and a real energy and thirst towards developing the love of and skills in STEAM subjects.

## **ON THE LINES**

Like many Cork companies, our operations have been moved partly online, and we are providing a number of virtual STEAM supports to our online community, including home-based Lockdown STEM and Arts Challenges for children & adults (<http://bit.ly/Lockdown-Challenges>), as well as “STEAM kids doing it for themselves” - inviting at-home kid ‘reporters’ to send us videos of STEAM activities, experiments and Lockdown submissions (<https://bit.ly/STEAM-Tube>).

However we do hope to be back in the classroom in the 2020/2021 school year, rolling out our STEAM-in-a-Box programmes to many more primary schools, with your help, and if necessary with an online rather than in school option.

Our 10-week programmes (e.g. Science-in-a-Box, Engineering-in-a-Box) are designed for upper primary schools, and provide partnership opportunities for STEM and Arts companies, philanthropic organisations, and local authorities to get involved in the support and delivery of the programmes within the classroom environment.

In Cork alone STEAM has delivered programmes to 46 primary schools, over 1,500 kids, 74 teachers, 91 industry professional and postgraduate co-teachers.

STEAM's hands-on, fun, problem-solving approach has proven effective in inspiring kids to love STEAM subjects, but also to love learning, and builds confidence, skills and resilience in kids who might otherwise be struggling with school. We achieve this, for example, during our "Engineering-in-a-Box" programme, by having the children work on projects where they construct lollypop stick structures using triangulation, discover load distribution with paper towers and plan and design a production line process within a sweet factory. STEAM's ultimate aim is to inspire children to love STEAM subjects and to empower them to become the future generation of Scientists, Technologists, Engineers, Artists and Mathematicians and more.

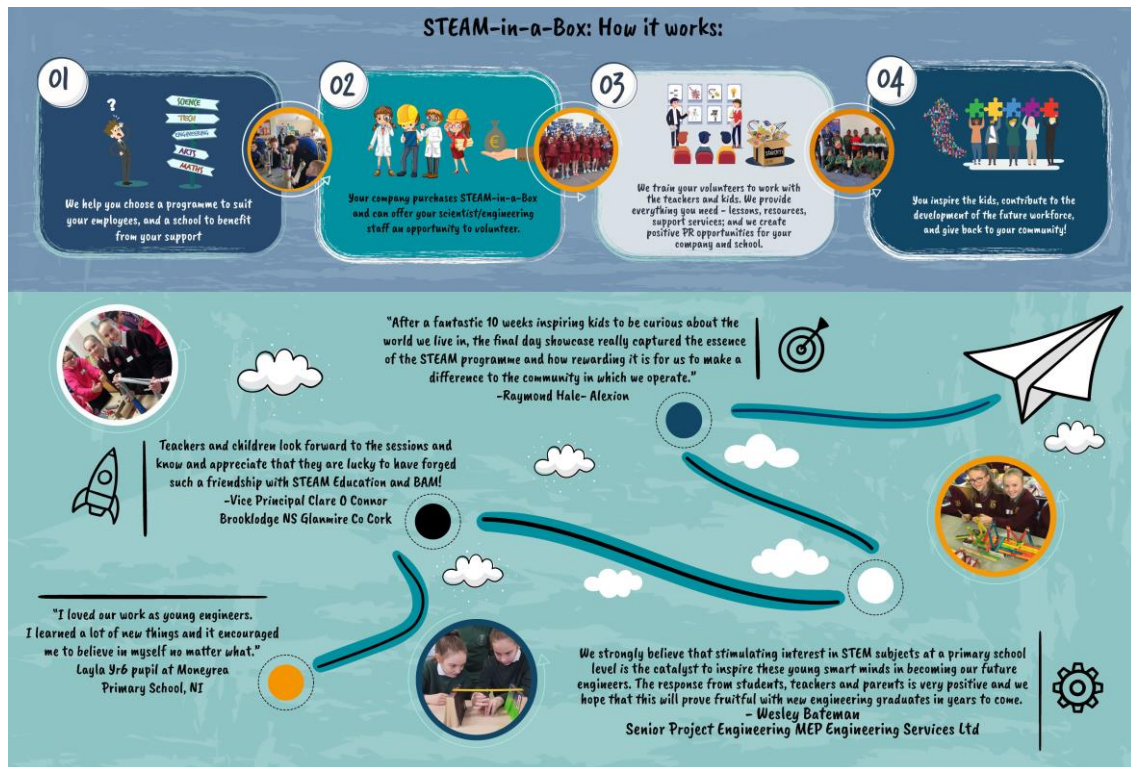
## **BLAZING A TRAIL**

STEAM Education has also worked with Cork City Council as part of their RAPID (Revitalising Areas through Planning, Investment and Development) programme, targeting designated areas of disadvantage and DEIS Schools. Nuala Stewart of Cork City Council (Former RAPID Coordinator) says that

*"The kids really loved the hands-on programmes, and their interaction with scientists and engineers opens up a whole new world of opportunities for them. It greatly encourages the children and young people to consider STEM careers and to progress to second and third-level education. In our experience, it goes beyond the classroom, with parents, teachers as well as students being enthused. The programme is an investment in the future as it gives each child, regardless of their ability, an equal opportunity to participate, question and offer opinions".*

With a solid survival plan and extremely supportive and expanding Cork company

partnerships STEAM education are looking forward to getting back into the classrooms, both physically and virtually, and with the help of the City Council and Cork Chamber members, the synergy and energy of the Cork business community can further expand their reach to the next generation of STEAM youth.



## JUMP ABOARD

In a nutshell, your company can get involved to support a local primary school - we train your STEM employees to co-deliver the programme with the primary school teacher and provide all the resources required, as well as a package of positive PR opportunities.

As such, participation provides multiple benefits - not only for the children involved, but for the teacher and broader school community; for the co-teaching volunteers; for the immediate community relations and reputation of the company; and for the longer term future proofing of a skilled engaged workforce.

For more information and to get involved, contact

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## Upcoming events

We are working with partners to bring you some learning and sharing webinars over the coming months. Keep an eye on our website and future email notifications!



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