

Newsletter



St Gabriel's Treehouse - Children's Disability Network Team

Manager's Message

Dear Families,

I am delighted to introduce myself as the new children's disability network manager of Treehouse Children's Disability Network Team. I am very much looking forward to getting to know the children and families that attend our service. We are sharing the details of the upcoming Network Meeting in the Newsletter. We are also focusing on our Occupational Therapy Department who have shared some useful tips and strategies on developing fine and gross motor skills. We are sharing information on a new group that is being introduced, The Sibs Workshop. Thank you for the warm welcome I have already received. I look forward to working together.

Kind regards,



Family Network Meeting

A Family Network Meeting is a collaborative, family-led session designed to bring together families, support networks, and service providers (such as Children's Disability Network Teams) to share experiences, exchange information, and influence service improvements. These meetings provide a safe space to discuss general issues, connect with others, and elect representatives, usually occurring quarterly. The CDNT family representatives will attend and give an update from Regional Network Meetings; Aisling (OT) will informally discuss the tip sheets & Elaine (SW) will talk on new Sibs Workshop.

Next Family Network Meeting: 2nd of June, 7:00pm - 8:30pm online; shared via message to families

Meet your Occupational Therapists

We currently have 4 full-time Occupational Therapists- Aisling, Aoife, Elaine & Jane. Occupational therapists (OTs) work with children in various settings, including clinical, school environments, and the home. OTs look at a child's functional strengths & areas of difficulty across different performance areas including activities of daily living, school, play and leisure and assist with strategies to promote independence, participation and quality of life. Occupational therapy helps children build essential life skills and enhance their overall well-being and participation in their daily activities.



Backward
Chaining
Handout

USEFUL TIPS/SUGGESTIONS FROM YOUR OT



Fine Motor
Skills for
Older
Children



Gross Motor
Handout

What We Have Been Up To




BEING ME GROUP 2026



GROUP FACILITATORS

Eliza Walsh- Psychologist
Kavan Eccleston Hutchinson- Assistant Psychologist
Linda Reen- Senior Occupational Therapist
Madeleine & Amy- UL OT Students

GROUP OVERVIEW

Group sessions were delivered in person in St Gabriel's centre each week for 3 weeks.

FOCUS OF THE GROUP

The Being Me group is a supportive, peer-based group for autistic teenagers focused on understanding autism and neurodiversity, building self-acceptance, and feeling comfortable being oneself. Through discussion and creative activities, participants explored masking, energy levels, personal interests, self advocacy and shared experiences, while connecting with others who may think in similar ways.

WHAT WORKED WELL

A safe, relaxed environment encouraged openness, peer support, and sharing of experiences.



Creative and practical activities helped participants engage and express themselves comfortably.



Shared discussions supported understanding and reflection.



Opportunities to share personal interests and passions helped build confidence and connection.



BENEFITS & OUTCOMES

- **Increased understanding** of autism, neurodiversity, and individual differences.
- Greater **self-acceptance** and **confidence** in being oneself.
- **Improved awareness** of masking, energy levels, and emotional wellbeing.
- Stronger sense of **connection** and **belonging** through shared peer experiences.

CHILDREN'S FEEDBACK

"I think this class is best for when you need a voice to talk about your perspectives"

"I liked being able to meet people like me"

"I liked finding people with the same interests as me"

"I enjoyed it because I learnt alot about autism from it"

PARENT FEEDBACK

"The way the kids are opening up shows how good they are with them"

Being Me Group




TRANSITION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL 2026




GROUP FACILITATORS

Linda Reen- Snr OT
Kavan Eccleston Hutchinson- Assistant Psychologist
Caaimhe Gleason SLT
Sophie Barbotin- SLT
Madeleine & Amy- UL OT Students
Caimhe & Rachel- UL SLT Students

GROUP OVERVIEW

Two group sessions were delivered each week over a four-week period, with a total of 22 children attending.

FOCUS OF THE GROUP

- Addressing concerns related to starting secondary school
- Recognising emotions and identifying where we feel them in our bodies.
- Developing Decider Skills to manage thoughts, feelings, and behaviour.
- Learning mindfulness techniques to support emotional regulation in school.

WHAT WORKED WELL

Games such as Jenga reduced pressure, making conversations feel more natural



Strong peer support, with children recognising shared worries



High engagement through practical, creative tasks



Increased confidence and participation as the group progressed



BENEFITS & OUTCOMES

- **Reduced anxiety** around transitioning to secondary school
- **Improved confidence** and **emotional awareness**
- Increased ability to **identify feelings** and use **copng strategies**
- Children felt less alone in their worries due to shared experiences

CHILDREN'S FEEDBACK

"Jenga helped me feel **included**"
"I liked making **new friends**"
"I enjoyed the **activities**"

PARENT FEEDBACK

"It gave him the chance to **mix with children** he'll be starting school with".
"It helped them understand **what to expect** with the transition".

PREPAREDNESS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

100% of attendees who completed the feedback questionnaire reported feeling **more prepared** for secondary school.

Transition to Secondary School Group

What was useful from; *Avoidant Eating Parent Workshop*

- Loved the discussion & emphasis on not feeling guilty as a parent.
- Understanding the relationship between nervous system & food.
- Hearing stories/perspectives from other parents.
- Useful Strategies shared
- Information shared
- Mealtime planning ideas.
- Importance of being regulated before mealtime.



GOSHH

Gender • Orientation • Sexual Health • HIV

Earlier this year, St Gabriel's staff took part in a workshop delivered by GOSHH, where they explored the history of Pride in Ireland, LGBT+ identity and terminology, gender bias, and how to be a supportive ally to those coming out. It was a valuable day that reflects our ongoing commitment to making St Gabriel's a place where every person is seen, respected, and welcomed for exactly who they are.



Upcoming Groups

(Updates on more groups coming soon)



Sibs Workshop

Meet other siblings, have fun, talk about the good and not-so-good parts of having a sibling with additional needs, play some games, explore how other brothers and sisters handle situations sometimes faced by siblings and learn about the services their brothers and sister receive.

Toilet Training

For parents to attend when you need support and advice when toilet training your child. We utilise the One Step at A Time Programme to advise parents on a 5 step approach to enable you to assist your child in learning the skill of using the toilet.

All About Autism

All About Autism aims to support parents/guardians in the period after autism diagnosis, empowering you to support your child. The content of the course will include information to help you to understand autism, develop an understanding of sensory differences and learn strategies to support emotional regulation.



Invitations to the above events are based on goals identified by your child, young person or family in your Individual Family Support Plan. Currently there are waiting lists for the above groups. Please do contact the team to discuss if you are interested in one of the events and if it would be appropriate for you and/ or your child to attend. We are currently looking at services for those on the waitlist.

Your Children's Disability Network Teams Current Vacancies

We currently have vacancies in Psychology & Occupational Therapy.

Vacant posts can be applied for at: <https://stgabriels.ie/contact/>

Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP)

The IFSP is developed in partnership between families and CDNT. The plan brings together the child's and family's strengths, needs, priorities, and desired outcomes alongside the knowledge and expertise of the team, guiding shared goals and supports across everyday environments.

You can find more out about IFSP's here:



WATCH NOW



Scan me

Treehouse CDNT, Dooradoyle, Limerick V94 VY9Y

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SUMMER IS COMING

DANCE LIMERICK

5-14 years

INCLUSIVE DANCE KIDS SUMMER CAMP

**10 am - 12 pm
Mon, Tues, Wed
6 - 8 July**

€25 for 3 mornings or €10 for 1

Dance Limerick in partnership with Local Creative Youth Partnership and Limerick City and County Council are hosting a three-day summer camp for children aged 5-14 with disabilities who love to dance. Taught by friendly teachers in a relaxed, supportive setting where kids can dance, learn new moves, and express creativity—no experience required.


BOOK ONLINE! DANCELIMERICK.IE

Dance Limerick Studio is an accessible venue. Please contact katy@dancelimerick.ie if you have any questions about access.



DANCE LIMERICK | Limerick City and County Council | Local Creative Youth Partnership | Limerick Arts | Limerick City and County Council | Local Creative

Scan QR code for more information on the **The Cerebral Palsy Foundation's CP Conntect event!** Offered both live & virtually



Contact Details of Community Based Supports for teenagers; *Parents have mentioned these and given good feedback*

- <https://www.dochasautism.ie/> **Has a new gym, social clubs**
- <https://www.asdireland.ie/> **Social & sport activity groups**
- <https://limericksports.ie/inclusion-club/> **Social & Sport activity groups**
- **Suas - Wall Climbing** - <https://suasclimbing.ie/>
- **Inclusive powerlifting training** - **Urban Barbell**
- **Horse riding Liskennett** - <https://www.sjf.ie/What-We-Do/Facilities/Liskennett-Farm>
- <https://www.gathering.ie/> - **Board Games**
- **Jigsaw** - <https://jigsaw.ie/> - **Mental Health Support**