



Northside
Partnership &



doras buí
a parents alone resource centre

Empowering Families Through Sensory Support— A Community Based Approach



Northside Partnership CAB 2.3 in collaboration with consortium partner Doras Bui

Thematic Area: Goal 2 Action 10

SICAP Case Study 2025: Supporting Families – Building Community

Target Group: People living in Disadvantaged Communities, Heads of One Parent Families, People Living with Disabilities



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag
an Aontas Eorpach
Co-Funded by the
European Union



Social Inclusion &
Community Activation
Programme



government supporting communities

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is co-funded by the Irish Government, through the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, and the European Social Fund Plus under the Employment, Inclusion, Skills and Training (EIST) Programme 2021 - 2027.

Intended Audience:

This case study is intended for the Local Community Development Committee and local stakeholders to help attract new beneficiaries. It is also intended for our funders to showcase examples of how we leverage our funding in partnership with local agencies to secure good outcomes for people experiencing disadvantage. The case study is also intended for local development companies nationally as an example of good practice in supporting parents of children with additional needs.



Summary:

This case study highlights a parenting and sensory programme designed to support families with children with additional needs in Dublin's Northside. The workshops, developed in partnership with Northside Partnership and Doras Buí, are funded under the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and respond to the growing demand for community-based support while parents wait, often up to four years, for clinical intervention through the Children's Disability Network Team or mainstream public supports.

Case Study

The Parenting and Sensory Programme was offered to support parents of children with additional needs. Sitting under SICAP Goal Two, Action 10 under our Annual Plan, the programme targets lone parents and people living in disadvantaged communities. The consortium model between Northside Partnership and Doras Buí was central to the initiative's success: Doras Buí contributed community knowledge and trusted relationships with families, while Northside Partnership provided SICAP funding to employ a Programme Coordinator, an Information and Support Worker (referenced as Education and Development worker in SICAP Annual Plan 2025) and a Support Officer. Together, support was given to children with additional needs and their parents to participate in sensory processing play training and the development of sensory play materials at home.

Delivery was explicitly aligned with SICAP horizontal principles: Promoting a human rights and equality framework, with a particular focus on gender equality and anti-discrimination practice, and developing collaborative approaches with stakeholders to identify and fill gaps in services for SICAP target groups.

Collaboration extended to local networks (Parent Led Autism Network, schools, Children's Disability Network Team) who referred families and supported follow-up, reflecting SICAP's emphasis on partnership and equality.

The need for this programme was identified through the ongoing support Doras Buí provides to the parents and children with additional needs who attend their centre, whereby they saw a growing demand for a community-based support for parents and children with additional needs.

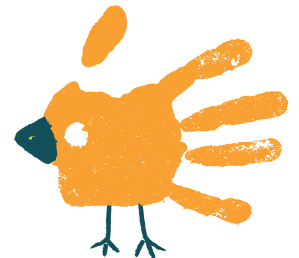
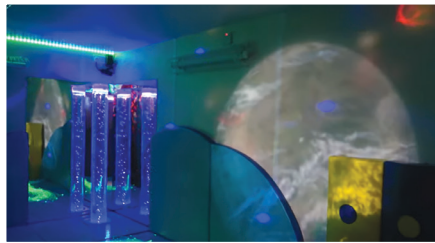


Programme Description

The case study centres on two interlinked elements:

- **Sensory Play Day:** A community-based event featuring sensory play stations, regulation tools, and practical demonstrations to reduce isolation, support parent-child bonding and share budget friendly strategies that could be replicated at home.
- **Sensory Processing Training:** Three two-hour occupational therapist-led sessions focused on recognising sensory needs, adapting home and school environments, and building daily routines.

SICAP funding covered facilitation, materials, and resources for parents, in addition to the coordination of the programme through the roles in the organisation listed above. In total fifteen parents and eleven children participated in the programmes. Seven parents and eleven children attended the Sensory Play Day, and nine parents participated in the Sensory Processing Training. One parent attended both workshops. A one-to-one meeting was initially held with each participant and a personal action plan was created, which informed the programme design. Parents then participated in the course and following feedback from participants the impact of the programmes was captured, some of which is evidenced in the accompanying video.



Key Outcomes

Data from IRIS monitoring, participant interviews, and video documentation recorded:

- Strengthened parent confidence, reduced isolation, and the development of supportive peer networks.
- Children thrived through sensory-rich play that improved regulation and interaction.
- Parents applied new strategies at home and have reported improvement in daily routines and family wellbeing. They also engaged with schools and sought further training.
- Community awareness of sensory-friendly practices was also significantly raised.

Challenges and Learning

Limited workshop capacity and resources meant that, unfortunately, some families were unable to participate. The high demand for this type of support highlights the need for sustained funding and the continuation of the programme to meet the needs of more families. Some participants also required more tailored, one-to-one support due to complex needs. Future programme designs will take these situations into consideration to ensure that necessary accommodations are proactively integrated into planning

Given the programme was delivered during the daytime, it excluded some parents from participating. To improve accessibility, we plan to run an evening programme for those who faced childcare or work-related challenges.

Based on participant feedback and with SICAP funding, a follow-up session with the occupational therapist will be scheduled to build on parents' learning. Given the overwhelmingly positive response and the value the programme delivered, we are committed to continuing this offering going forward.

This programme, supported by SICAP, provided free, inclusive, and tailored support for recognised SICAP target groups, in particular people living in disadvantaged communities, lone parents and people living with disabilities.

Collaboration and shared expertise delivered strong outcomes, with parents requesting more sessions.

The case study highlights SICAP's role in promoting social inclusion and the need for continued investment in sustainable, community-led supports that enhance family wellbeing and uphold equality and dignity.

By empowering parents, strengthening community networks, and promoting equality, this initiative directly contributes to SICAP's national objectives of reducing social exclusion and fostering resilient, empowered communities.

