

## Cottage Autism Network - Annual Report 2021



SUPPORTING PEOPLE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

CHY 18103  
RCN: 20068790

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### Chairperson's Address

We started off 2021 a bit differently from recent years. We were in another lockdown and even though people had adjusted to this way of living apart, we all wanted the “normality” of life back.

We were busy in the background organising activities and putting procedures into place for when we could re-open in a safe way. However, the C.A.N community found new ways of doing things by zoom and remote restrictions. We were able to reopen and have our first activity at Easter.

During the year we were able to expand our weekly activities as well as introduce new programmes in response to the diverse range of needs of our members. Our social media presence created awareness in our community which led to some amazing opportunities for fund raising and organisations reaching out to C.A.N for advice on sensory builds and inclusion programmes. We have built up relationships with other organisations and have undertaken training as a Board both individually and as a whole. We delivered on the objectives we set ourselves in 2020.

C.A.N is still and has always been centred on its members and we are delighted that we maintained our membership throughout 2021 and gained some new members too. By the end of the year we had 196 members. C.A.N is financially in a good place, but we need to increase volunteer engagement going forward. We are extremely grateful and thankful to have you and your family involved in our organisation and we will strive throughout 2022 and beyond to create and promote a more inclusive society for all as well as helping to make new memories and experiences for you and your families.

Unfortunately due to the continuing situation with Covid-19 some of our activities did not start up again in 2021.

I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank my fellow board members for their amazing drive, energy and commitment. Individually they have all given so much to C.A.N and for that I thank you.

Signed: Louise Fitzpatrick / Ciara Kehoe (C.A.N Chairperson)

### Governance

Our Board met approximately every six weeks.

Our designated child liaison and welfare person for 2021 was Nemone Van Der Blaike and after joining the board in the summer of 2021 Joanne Barry also trained, so we currently have two child liaison board members.

During 2021 C.A.N has implemented and complied with the charity governance code.

Individually board members attended Zoom webinars and training courses and these included:

- Board roles and responsibilities
- Developing an effective annual report
- The role of the chairperson
- The role of the company secretary
- Charity Governance code
- Companies act 2014 / 2009
- GDPR 1
- GDPR 2
- Tulsa safe guarding training
- First Aid training
- Social media training

### Activities & Achievements

While our weekly activities are paid for by parents they are heavily subsidised by C.A.N, allowing parents to make a nominal contribution. Members benefit from a slightly reduced rate, while most activities are open to non-members also. All our facilitators and volunteers that have access to children are Garda vetted by C.A.N and through the Carlow Volunteer Centre.

Our activities are fully insured and we recruit facilitators that are trained & experienced in their relevant area. Parents / Guardians are required to stay on site during activities to ensure that each child is supported to participate to their individual ability and help to reduce anxiety. This is a huge benefit for parents/guardians too as they are given the opportunity to chat and develop friendships with other parents. Numbers are usually kept small in our groups to maximise participation and keep the environment as sensory friendly and calm as possible.

## Children's Activities

### Teen Bowling



Our teen bowling was held in the Leisuremax Wexford. The teens availed of one hour of bowling and pizza afterwards. We had 3 sessions due to Covid restrictions and had 21 children.



### Little Kneaders

We were still in Lockdown coming into February and we contacted Amy who supplied 50 members with varies different therapeutic putty boxes. She posted or hand delivered these to our members.



### CLAYMAZING

Claymazing classes have always been a popular activity. Over lockdown we reached out to Helen and she supplied 66 members with a modelling box and a video just for C.A.N members on how to make two models for Easter.

We went on to have 2 further successful sessions with Helen. The first was when it was safe to do so in person and that took place in the T.A.G centre. We had 19 children at the summer class. Our Halloween spooky ghosts and witches was a great success with 21 children enjoying making their Claymazing creations.



**WhizzKids**

In June we offered our families more online experiences with WhizzKids. They could offer our members creativity, design coding and problem solving. 13 members signed up for the package and were able to log on at any time to use it.

**Learn to cycle programme**

Our cycle programme is always a popular activity. In May we were able to run it outdoors in Min Ryan Park. We had 2 sessions with 11 children

**Swimming**

We were delighted to hold 26 sessions in Wexford swimming pool with 368 attending. The parents and children's feedback on this activity has always been so positive.

**Drumming**

Conor from "Sound Out Rhythm" did drumming for fun in the T.A.G centre and we had 2 sessions with 30 children.

**The Railway Yard – Duncormick**

A brilliant year was had with Martina in Duncormick. Our teens enjoyed 10 sessions that involved 59 children & our 5-11 year olds had 10 sessions with 73 children.



### Soccer 4 Fun

We restarted our soccer sessions outdoors for the first time at Wexford Celtic FC for the summer months and then moved indoors to our new venue at Clonard community Centre. Soccer took place every Saturday morning from 10-12 and we have successfully held 22 sessions with 223 children.



### Wexford SK8tr kids

We had a fantastic afternoon in Min Ryan with Kevin from SK8tr kids. All the children were able to have the freedom of skateboarding and some chats were had on the kerb about all the moves!!



### Therapeutic Horse Riding

Our sessions with Olive and Dave have been a huge success. The children have really enjoyed the relaxed and calming atmosphere around the yard with Blossom and Daisy, resident pigs, chickens, Marley and Cooper; Olive's faithful dogs and the resident cats Tilly, Hunter and Blue. We have run 25 sessions with 415 children.



### Summer Surfing

2021 was another great season for our surfing sessions. Jack-Tim and the guys in the “Surf Shack” had an amazing 16 weeks of sessions with 206 children.



### The Nutty Scientist

Our first sessions of our little scientists of 2021 in the Allied Hub. All the children really enjoyed making dry ice, slime and paper planes. We had 3 sessions with 28 children.

### Glass Making

We had our first ever glass making with Pauline Quiqley in the T.A.G Centre and it was a great success. The children made gorgeous sun catchers. This will most likely run again in 2022. We had 1 session with 18 children.





**Build A Bear**

Our first build a bear with Dawn from Craft central in the T.A.G Centre. The choice of bears was fantastic and the children had a wonderful time. We held 2 sessions with 23 children.



**Lantern Making**

Lantern making was another new activity that our children benefited from in 2021 held at the T.A.G Centre with Caoimhe Dunn and we held 2 sessions with 9 children.

**Teen Pottery**

We were able to resume our Teen pottery with Mairead that was started back in 2020. The children had made their pieces already and could finish off what they had made, and also made another 2 pieces. We had 3 sessions and 4 teenagers attended.



**Elf Academy @ The Heritage Park**

The Elf Academy was our Christmas event for 2021. With Covid restrictions still in place, outdoor activities were the only available. The children were brought to the Crannog outside and could make their own wrapping paper, Christmas decorations, Reindeer food and Christmas cracker. On the way out they had their photo taken and had hot chocolate on the outdoor terrace. They all had a fantastic time and we had 2 sessions with 50 children.



**Foot Golf**

A First for C.A.N and it was an amazing sunny summer morning. All you could hear was parents and children laughing as they went around the course trying to pot a football into a giant pot hole! We had 30 children attend.

**Land Of Light - Wells House**



This was the first of its kind in Wexford and C.A.N was delighted to be a part of its success. We worked closely with Kevin and his team from “Land Of Light” to make the sensory evening as enjoyable as possible. There was toned down lighting, reduced crowds and the music was kept low to make the walk through the woods more enjoyable.

The feedback from the parents and children was fantastic and we hope to work with Kevin again in 2022. We had 85 families from C.A.N sign up for the 10% discount, and numerous other families from across the county of Wexford and Ireland came to the sensory evening.



**Cúl Camp 2021**

It was Fantastic to run Cúl Camps for the second year after some uncertainty with Covid. This was our first big meet up with all the members after the lockdown and it was great to see everyone again. The camp was available to 180 children with 179 attending. It was an amazing 3 days and the whole atmosphere was one of absolute freedom and laughter. It was heart-warming to not just see the children having a good time but coaches, volunteers and parents.

## Parent / Carer activities



### The Reason I Jump

We had a screening of the film at the Omniplex Wexford and 35 parents availed of the tickets. It was a huge success and we hope to run something similar again this year.



### Adult Wood Working Class

We were able to run a class for our parents on a Tuesday evening in the WWETB. The class ran for 14 weeks and was attended by 5 parents.

### Coffee Morning

Our coffee mornings restarted, which ran fortnightly in Min Ryan Park.

### Family Days

We were able to enjoy numerous family fun days over the course of 2021 even with Covid restrictions in place. It was great to see our members avail of all the facilities. C.A.N covered the cost of the admission into the following:

- **Johnstown Castle** - We held a family weekend in April for parents to enjoy the new look Johnstown Castle and all it had to offer. With the Covid guidelines still in place this outdoor weekend was a huge success and we had 80 children attend.
- **The Irish National Heritage Park** - The children and parents were able to enjoy the playground and the falconry centre on the day. Covid restrictions were still in place at this time so unfortunately the café was only available for take away.
- **Rosslare Community & Sports Centre** - A family fun activity day in Rosslare. The children could avail of tennis, bowling, crazy golf and indoor activities such as table tennis and table soccer. The day was enjoyed by all and we had 115 people.

Fundraising

50 Miles In April

This was our first ever virtual fund raiser. We had 50 families from all over the county sign up to walk the roads, paths and beaches of Wexford. We supplied everyone who signed up with a C.A.N t-shirt and it was a great success which we hope to run again. In total €9049.43 was raised for us.

The Rackard League

They did an amazing fundraiser for C.A.N and donated €1,000. Many thanks!



The Keane Family Raffle

The Keane family made a hugely generous donation to C.A.N of €20,749.54 by selling their home and giving us a percentage of the sale. This was instrumental in organising our conference and numerous activities.



Mindulee

Many thanks to Mindulee who raised a massive €2,505 for us. She chose C.A.N as her charity for Miss Ireland.



**Catherine McAuley Junior School**

They organised a silly sock day and raised €250. Again, a huge “Thank you”!!!



**Bridget’s Sweet Boutique**

Bridget’s Sweet Boutique promoted autism awareness and raised €160 from the sales of her cupcakes.

**McDonalds Wexford**

McDonald’s Wexford raised €367.80 for C.A.N on world Autism Awareness day and they also gave us vouchers for reduced rate happy meals for C.A.N members and their siblings.



**Happy Trails Fundraiser Raffle**

Thanks to Olive & Dave at “Happy Trails”, they raised €1969.85 for us through their Christmas raffle.



### Other Generous Donations

- Serena O'Sullivan (Wexford Craft Creations) - €150
- Anonymous Donation - €160
- Centra Castlebridge - €160
- Anonymous Donation - €100
- CBS Primary School Wexford - €316
- Anonymous Donation for Cúl Camps - €100
- CB - Club Vitae - €170.09
- Tesco (Nominate a Cause Wexford) - €334

### Challenges Ahead

The last year has seen C.A.N grow and develop as an organisation. We have increased our membership & built relationships with other charities and organisations. The challenges ahead include continuing to build on these relationships and to create more awareness of our organisation in the wider community. To continue to deliver to our members through responding to needs as they arise. The workload for our board is increasing and we would encourage parents to consider a role on the board as we implement policies and practices in accordance with the Governance Code.

This work is important to deliver on, so as to ensure the long term sustainability of our organisation, and will require continued investment in training of our board members so as to ensure that they feel confident and competent in their respective roles. An additional challenge is to be able to continue to retain our current volunteers while also attracting new ones to help expand our programmes and initiatives.

## Conclusion

2021 had been an amazing year for C.A.N. Even though we were still in various lockdowns we came out of them stronger and our activities have gone from strength to strength. As an organisation we have received amazing support from the public and we are looking forward to building on these relationships in 2022. Going forward:

- C.A.N hopes to develop our activities, particularly for older children/young adults on the autism spectrum including a mentorship programme whereby the older kids can come and volunteer with us.
- Continue with existing activities for children and parents
- Expand our teen programme
- Increase our volunteer numbers
- Continue our annual Cúl Camps
- Starting our football inclusion camp
- Build our profile and promote awareness

## C.A.N



## THANK YOU

There is a long list of people who without their dedication C.A.N could not continue to offer so many activities:

- Leisuremax for facilitating both our younger and teen sessions of Bowling.
- Kelly's café for hosting our coffee mornings.
- Michelle Cogley for giving up her time to take photographs for our social media
- Our volunteers that come every week to activities
- Wexford GAA, for their continued support

- Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board Community Education Programme
- Thank you to each and every one of you. Members and non-members who have given your time to C.A.N and our families.

### **Contact Information**

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Twitter: @Wexford\_CAN

Instagram: cottageautism

**Cottage Autism Network Wexford CLG aims to improve the quality of life of people on the Autism Spectrum and their families by providing support, promoting equality and inclusion as well as raising awareness in the community by being a voice for our members.**

**Cottage Autism Network Wexford CLG**  
**(A Company Limited by Guarantee and not having Share Capital)**

**Detailed profit and loss account**  
**Financial year ended 31st December 2021**

	2021	2020
	€	€
<b>Turnover</b>		
Donations & fundraisers	48,537	5,681
Membership	3,883	2,720
HSE Grants	-	5,300
WWETB grant	1,500	1,500
Wexford County Council Grant	-	700
Calendar	-	655
Prizebond winnings	-	100
Members contributions	15,903	6,820
	<u>69,823</u>	<u>23,476</u>
<b>Administrative expenses</b>		
Meeting, travel and event expenses	3,640	3,516
Insurance	1,392	1,234
Trips and activities for kids	42,212	25,382
Stationery and advertising	2,363	2,208
Telephone	1,002	1,147
Workshops and seminars	5,789	3,330
Legal and professional	-	338
Accountancy fees	1,538	1,623
Bank charges	76	49
Sundry expenses	711	261
Subscriptions	-	150
Depreciation of tangible assets	656	744
	<u>59,379</u>	<u>39,982</u>
<b>Profit/(loss) for the financial year</b>	<u><u>10,444</u></u>	<u><u>(16,506)</u></u>