



CEO's Annual Report 2022

A chara

Last year was FASD Ireland's first complete year of operation, and it was packed full of activities and progress that I could never have imagined! As Ireland emerged from Covid19, correspondence and interest in FASD Ireland started to get busy. Emails, telephone calls and letters all asking for our help in some way. It became apparent that FASD Ireland could no longer be operated from a home office, and so Scott and I went in search of new premises. We were really pleased to find 51 O'Connell Street, Ennis, in February, as it provides adequate space for our new Headquarters and Training Centre.

During the year, we made contact with many stakeholders, and looking back when writing this report, it is evident that we cast our net wide. We are pleased to work with organisations including the HSE Wellbeing, Alcohol and Mental Health Programme, National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Social Entrepreneurs Ireland (SEI), and our partners the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower.

We have delivered a considerable number of online educational workshops through the year, especially given our focus on supporting children into education and not out of it. By far the most popular workshop has been 'FASD in the Classroom' on Thursdays for SNA's and SENCo's. We also held three online 'Introduction to FASD' workshops that were well attended from all sections of the community. These included an outline of Non-violent Resistance (NVR) which many parents, carers and educators will find extremely useful.

In the Summer I was fortunate to be selected by Social Entrepreneurs Ireland to take part in their Ideas Academy, and this culminated in an award of €6,500 towards the pilot of the FASD Hub for Ireland. I am eternally grateful to the sponsors Bank of America and Lifes2good Foundation for digging deeper and awarding FASD Ireland more than requested in my pitch. It means that we can operate the pilot FASD Hub for Ireland with all equipment in place when it launches at the end of Q1 / 2023.

31st August marked a turning point for FASD Ireland. We were pleased to host Minister of State for Disability, Anne Rabbitte TD, who came to Ennis and formerly opened our Headquarters and Training Centre. This is the first time that a Minister of State has spoken publicly about FASD, and also committing to recognising and raising awareness of FASD. The Minister also talked about the need for providing assistance to the families by working with agencies, including FASD Ireland, that exist to deliver essential support.

We were also joined by Senator Timmy Dooley, Cathal Crowe TD and Clare Colleran Molloy, Mayor of Ennis along with representatives from the HSE Public Health (Alcohol, Drugs and Well-being) team, Ennis CAMHs, local education providers and members of the national and local press. We were also pleased to welcome people living with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder to the event, and delighted that they had the opportunity to share their lived experience with the Minister.

In September, we celebrated World FASD Awareness Day on September 9th, and this was marked by Clare County Council lighting their building red, for the first time, to show their support. We also welcomed Maggie May McHugh to the team. Maggie is our Office Administrator and also frequently contributes to our online workshops and events that we attend, speaking about her own lived experience. Maggie is carrying on a family tradition of being a champion for people living with FASD in Ireland. I think it is really important to acknowledge that Maggie's mum Veronika and her colleague Michele were both extremely active lobbyists and supporters of families living with FASD over the previous decade, and their work has provided a great foundation for us to build on.

We attended a number of conferences during the year. In November, I was particularly thrilled to attend the Inclusion Ireland 'Pathway to inclusive education' conference in Dublin. Also in November, and closer to home, the team attended the Clare CYPSC "Clare Trauma Informed" conference in Ennis.

FASD Ireland's social platforms continue to be very popular. During 2022 the numbers of followers increased rapidly, and we continue to grow this organically, in particular from people living in Ireland. Whilst we update these channels with our news and progress regularly, we have also made several contributions to local and national press, as well as taking part in local radio interviews from Donegal to Cork, and Clare to Dublin.

The partnership with Hidden Disabilities Sunflower is incredibly robust, and continues to deliver funding to support our work at FASD Ireland. During 2022, we dispatched over 100,000 Sunflower wearables across Ireland, and successfully recruited 17 new member organisations to join the Sunflower, including Ryanair, Irish Citylink, Tesco Ireland and Chronic Pain Ireland. We are grateful to Paul White, CEO and the team at Hidden Disabilities Sunflower for their support throughout the year, and in particular their work promoting World FASD Awareness Day on September 9th.

Our first Annual Accounts have been prepared and signed by the Directors. The accounts are available here and anyone can view them either online or by calling to our offices. I believe that total transparency is key to our success, and especially as a not-for-profit social enterprise, it is important to share our administration costs are low, and most of our funding is allocated to supporting people who need it - the reason why we exist.

I would like to finish by thanking everyone in the team here in FASD Ireland. It has been an exceptional year of progress, and much hard work. I look forward to 2023 with great enthusiasm, working with our stakeholders to raise the awareness of FASD and provide essential support for people living with FASD across the country.

Is mise, le meas

Tristan Casson-Rennie
Chief Executive Officer
FASD Ireland CLG

3rd February 2023