



MUIRÍOSA  
FOUNDATION

*Host Family Support*  
*(Share a Break And Room to Share)*



*Annual Report*  
**2013**

## **Description of Host Family Support:**

Host family support is now a vital and integral part of overall respite provision within the counties of Westmeath, Longford, Laois, Offaly and south Kildare / west Wicklow.

As centre - based respite contracts, host family support has expanded in recent years to meet the increased demand emanating from this.

Many hosts are providing regular respite to individuals with complex needs. This includes children who have high medical needs. A large number of individuals who require constant supervision avail of regular respite under the scheme.

## **Opinions of People Involved in Scheme:**

It is the experience of the social work department that parents of young children are increasingly seeking host family support as an alternative to centre-based respite.

**Elaine Fisher**, mother of James (7), writes of the Share a Break scheme: *“Share a Break is very beneficial for other siblings because it gives me time for one to one with them.*

*There is calmness in the house when my child is on Share a Break.*

*It was great to have back up in an emergency “.*

**Marie Cassidy** (mother of Cian aged 12) writes about what Share a Break means to her: *“Share a Break means that it is time for myself and to spend time with my other children. For Cian it means interacting with another family and this is good for him”.*

**Catherine Keane** (mother of Aidan (aged 10)) *“Looking after my son is physically, mentally and emotionally demanding. He requires a high level of supervision and it is difficult to maintain this on a daily basis. It is very tiring, especially when you have other children whose needs also need to be met.*

*I have no family support network to help with his care. I have come to depend and rely on Share a Break in order to help me maintain the level of care he requires. Our life is structured around our son. We have to work around him and his needs. My other children also have to work around him, in terms of where he can go, what activities he can participate in etc.*

*Share a Break for me is a break. The only time aside from school when my son is away from home. I do not have to worry. I know he is safe and happy. It gives me a day of freedom and a break from routine. In his absence, the house is more peaceful. It is even a break from the noise. I have used this time to do even simple things such as go for a walk, sleep, go into town and walk around the shops with my daughter or go for lunch. This is time when you know you can plan something, have a rest or just spend time with your other children.*

*We benefit as a family also. My daughter can choose a programme on TV. She can play with her toys without him destroying her game. She is not shouted at. She recently started ballet. This would not be possible without Share a Break. Share a Break gives us the opportunity to experience a little normality - to do things that others take for granted. I am very thankful for this. It is invaluable to me and I do not know how I would manage without it”.*

**Siobhán Bulfin** (mother of Daniel who is aged 10) writes about what Share a Break means to her and her family: *“The Share a Break is a tremendous support to my husband George and me and to our son, Fred. Because of this regular time together we can plan and discuss our plans and challenges and spend one to one time with each other.*

*It has brought our wider family together, as my brother John, who looks after Daniel has become like an older brother to both boys.*

*As a consequence of being a well balanced and happy family, we are able to reach out to others. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. From one grateful mum, Siobhan”*

### **Adults who avail of Share a Break state the following:**

**Majella Mahoney** (42) has availed of Share a Break for the past 15 years. She says *“I like going on Share a Break. Kathleen brings me to hear music. She brings me to her mother’s house. I like being in her company. I look forward to going to Kathleen’s house”.*

**Anne Cosgrove** (49) has been going on Share a Break for the past 10 years. She says *“ I love going to Nora to go out places. Nora is a lovely person and I get on very well with her husband and children. I would not give it up for the world”.*

### **Host Parents’ Comments:**

**Rose and Pat Maher** (Rose and Pat are in their sixties and take Séamus, a fifty year old man, for host care). They state *“Having Séamus in our home is a ‘win win’ situation. He has the freedom to be independent. He motivates us to go places. We are just back from Kerry ... we had a great time. Séamus wants to know when we are going back. We organised a birthday party for Séamus. The whole community celebrated ... he’s still getting presents”.*

**As Table 1 indicates there has been a significant increase in the numbers of children availing of Share-a-Break, particularly in Westmeath/Longford and South Kildare. All those children have complex needs and receive regular respite with their hosts.**

**Table 1: Number of people participating in Share a Break**

Region	Hosts	Children	Days	€ Cost	Adults	Days	€ Cost	Total Cost (Adults and Children)
Westmeath/ Longford	99 (88)	68 (58)	3,215 (2,720)	156,090 (131,385)	62 (68)	2,794 (3,303)	115,185 (138,025)	271,275 (269,470)
Laois/ Offaly	67 (66)	22 (23)	811 (995)	42,700 (48,900)	47 (47)	2,312 (2,237)	97,580 (96,417.50)	140,280 (145,317.50)
S. Kildare/ W. Wicklow	44 (36)	42 (36)	991 (890)	55,580 (45,400)	6 (4)	158 (108)	6,920 (4,580)	62,500 (49,980)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>210 (190)</b>	<b>132 (117)</b>	<b>5017 (4,605)</b>	<b>254,370 (225,685)</b>	<b>115 (119)</b>	<b>5,264 (5,738)</b>	<b>219,685 (239,082.50)</b>	<b>474,055 (464,767.50)</b>

- Share a Break generally costs €40 for a 24 hour period and €25 for part of a day.
- Figures for 2012 in brackets.
- A small number of adults pay privately from their own funds.

## Room To Share

This scheme provides full time, permanent care to 20 adults. These people continued to live happily with their host carers during 2013. The majority of those placed (13) live in Longford/Westmeath. The total cost for the 20 placements is €176,929.

**Table 2: Number of People Participating in Room to Share**

Region	Hosts	Number Placed	Cost €
Westmeath / Longford	8 (9)	13 (13)	108,908 (101,499)
Laois / Offaly	5 (5)	6 (6)	60,378 (60,378)
Kildare / West Wicklow	1 (1)	1 (1)	7,643 (6,621)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b> (15)	<b>20</b> (20)	<b>176,929</b> (168,499)

## Host Families

The total number of hosts providing respite in 2013 was 210. A total of 36 new host families were recruited across all regions in 2013. Most of the new hosts who were recruited heard of the scheme through personal contact.

## Summary

As the testimonies of those involved indicated, Host Care is a vital and integral part of the respite and residential services delivered by Muiríosa. Given the contraction in centre-based respite and home help provision it is the only form of support available to a number of individuals and their families.

Within Laois/Offaly and Westmeath/Longford a total of 218 people availed regularly of the services of the schemes at a total cost of €580,841. In South Kildare/West Wicklow 49 people availed of the schemes at a total cost of €70,143.

The total number of all those availing of the Share-a-Break / Room-to-Share schemes was **267** at a cost of **€650,984**. This represents a total of:

- **5,017** days respite for children,
- **5,264** days respite for adults and
- **Permanent Full Time Care for 20 adults.**

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