

# The BASE @ Tobin Mid-term Evaluation Report

June 2022



1 January 2020 - 30 June 2022

Project ID: 0010358322

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## 1.0 Introduction

Bringing Additional Support to Everyone – The BASE @ Tobin runs from Tobin Centre in Moortown. It is a five-year Empowering Young People programme funded by The National Lottery Community Fund NI to the value of £493,553. It is designed to meet the requirements of young people up to 18 years with additional support needs. The programme was launched in January 2020 and currently has a total registration of 148 families from across Mid-Ulster, with 190 young people with a wide range of additional support needs and 162 siblings. The programme at mid-term exceeds the targeted plans to support 71 families, 82 young people and 92 siblings.

The BASE @ Tobin has been carefully designed following detailed consultation with the young people and carers of the young people with additional support needs. The programme was intended to facilitate the engagement of these young people within the community, providing an opportunity to participate in "every day" activities enjoyed by other young people. The project provides a weekly support service to young people and enables family time experiences outside the home in an environment that suits their needs.

Elaine Curry, an external evaluator was commissioned to conduct a mid-term evaluation of the project from an independent, external perspective and report on the progress of the project. This report is the mid-term evaluation report that includes all activities up until the end of June 2022.

The evaluation will:

- **Explore what is working well:** what works and where the gaps are in relation to activities and services offered.
- **Explore the three outcomes of the programme:** how the project has helped the young people with additional needs attend services independently from their parents, has improved health and well-being and improved support networks of children with additional needs in the rural Mid Ulster area.
- **Explore sustainability planning:** looking at continuing services after the 5th year, adapting and exploring sustainable options. We want to look at changing needs after the pandemic too.

There is a full mid-term evaluation report, summary report and 1-page impact report for a variety of different stakeholders.

## 2.0 Project design

### 2.1 Empowering Young People

National Lottery Community Fund Empowering Young People programme has the predominant intended outcomes that help young people: get the skills they need for their future; have better relationships with their support networks, communities and have good health and well-being.

The focus of the programme is to provide:

- *Opportunities for young people to participate in a range of independent activities;*
- *Opportunities for the families to participate in activities together; and*
- *Opportunities to support families in their role as carers.*

### 2.2 Tobin Centre

The Tobin Centre established in 2012, provides a resource for young people in Moortown and the surrounding areas. Since its establishment, Tobin Centre has continually grown and developed to act as a community resource for babies, toddlers, young people, parents, and guardians living in Moortown and its surrounding areas. Over the past ten years, there has been an ever-increasing demand for services. The organisation's activities are very much “user-driven” and are within the organisation's strategic themes.

### 2.3 The Base @ Tobin

The Base @ Tobin is a five-year programme funded by The National Lottery Community Fund NI. It is designed to meet the requirements of children with additional needs aged 4 to 18 years. Starting in January 2020, it was officially launched on 15th February 2020, with 71 anticipated families to benefit from across Mid Ulster.

At the end of Year 1 there was a total of 68 registered families, with 93 registered children and 70 siblings. At the end of Year 2, 124 registered families, 168 registered children and 128 siblings. Now mid-term of the project there is a total of 148 families, 190 registered children and 162 siblings with The Base @ Tobin. These children have a range of additional support requirements, including Autism, Asperger's, ADHD, Developmental Delays, Learning Difficulties, Sensory Issues, Hearing Loss, Sight Loss and Down Syndrome.

The funding has allowed Tobin to deliver the empowering young people's programme, providing a programme of recreational, health and well-being activities. All activities are intended to

improve their quality of life, potentially supporting higher independence and increasing their social participation and overall well-being.

The project has made excellent links with other organisations: The Empower Project, DADS (Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Support), Mid Ulster Disability Forum (MUDF), Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) Locality Planning Group, Parenting NI, Fresh Minds Education, BEAM Creative Network, Magherafelt/Cookstown Action for Children Family Support Hub Network, GOLD Surestart in Cookstown and Solas in Belfast.

Table 1 below summarises the key project outcomes. Outcomes and associated KPIs were agreed with the National Lottery Community Fund. This report is concerned with the activities and milestones for years 1, 2 and part of 3, the mid-term review.

**Table 1: Three outcomes of the project:**



**Outcome 1:**

**Young people will attend and attend independently of the parent/family support**

Young people with additional needs will feel confident and happy to attend activities independent of their families. They will develop better relationships with their peers and this improvement impacts on their physical, emotional and social well-being.



**Outcome 2:**

**Young people with additional needs will have improved health and well-being**

Ensuring that young people have the skills to build relationships and that rural communities create conditions to promote equality and inclusion.



**Outcome 3:**

**Improved support networks of children with additional needs in rural Mid Ulster**

Ensuring that young people and their families have improved support networks and rural communities create and maintain strong relationships and learning support networks for those facing similar challenges.

## 2.4 Staffing to support the delivery of activities

The following staff are in place to support the delivery of the project activities:

- Programme Manager: 16 hours per week
- Project Support Worker: 16 hours per week
- Casual support workers

The role and approach of the staff has a considerable part to play in the success of the programme and all stakeholders have reiterated this. The adaptable and enthusiastic nature of the staff has proven to be extremely impactful on participants who have established genuine and positive relationships with them. The Programme Manager prioritises staff development, allowing staff to feel well equipped and comfortable in their roles.



## 3.0 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation of the Base @ Tobin focused on the collection of evidence demonstrating the achievement of key aspects of the project outcomes. We engaged with a wide range of stakeholders involved in the project, including staff, support workers, volunteers, participants and parents/carers. The external evaluation gathered much information exploring how the project met Empowering Young People outcomes.

### **The evaluation activities include:**

- Review of project output records and reports: activity records, feedback, reports and annual charity commission reports.
- Review of networking, engagement, yearly progress reports and session evaluations: engagement activities, thermoevaluators and visuals – snapshot and photos of activities.
- Registration of events/ activity comments.
- Monthly KPI reports to the committee.
- Eighteen guided conversations in total were carried out. Seventeen were parents, two were support workers, and two were committee members. Two of those involved held dual roles in the project.
- Interviews with eight staff and support workers – focus group/ celebration session.
- Outcome star activities sheets.
- Survey Monkey had forty replies from families.
- Capture likes, challenges, improvements, ideas, observations of children and support for the family.
- Interviewing partners: consulting with a range of project stakeholders to gather information on their experience of the project and evidence of impact: To find out the impact of support provided to them and an external viewpoint.
- Analysing key impacts in relation to each of these project outcomes to ascertain key outputs to planned milestones.

## 4.0 Mid-term Project Achievements

### 4.1: Outcome 1 Achievements

Outcome 1: Young people will attend and attend independently of the parent/family support

#### WHAT DID WE DO?



604 Young people attend facilitated youth activities

2039 Young people attended family together activities

#### Activities included:

Cooking, Ipad sessions, Arts/Crafts, Relaxation, Fun Fitness and Mobility Sessions

- Youth Club
- Summer Scheme

#### 4.1.1 Independent Activities

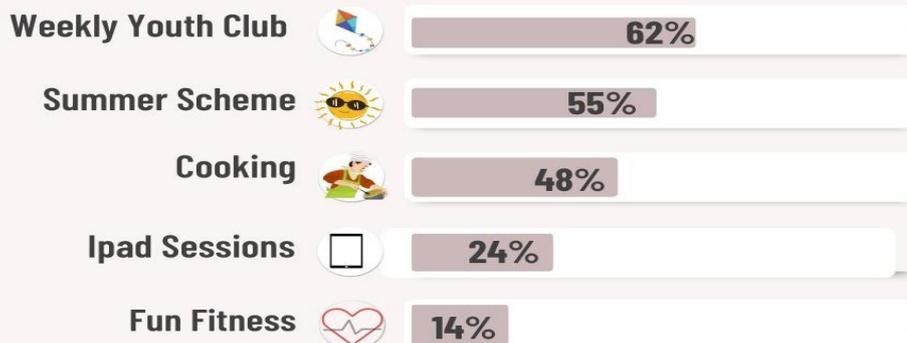
The project delivers a range of facilitated youth activities to provide the young person with additional support needs the ability to engage in activities independently. The range of independent activities offered expanded in year 2 with the introduction of Summer Scheme and Youth Club.

**63% of children attended independent activities and the parents scored the activities 9/10.**



#### Independent activities

What children enjoyed the most





*“Independence is key for my daughter's development. She is happy going to The BASE without me which boosts her confidence immensely. It means a lot that she has decided to go to something herself without anyone. This place is great for all the family and has helped my child more than words can explain. The BASE @ Tobin is always a positive experience for my daughter and our family. This means she is happy to go whatever the activity. This gives us great reassurance that she will want to go and have a great time”.*

## Summer Scheme

The summer scheme has been a real hit with the young people and parents. Activities enjoyed the most were: table tennis, magic show, sand, baking, circus, flower sticks, Fizz Whizz Pop, sand art, puffy paint, scratch art, Lego, cookery, table tennis, basketball, the dark den, body roller machine, sensory room, slime mats, making clay and the trains.

Outcomes noticed: Peace of mind, more confidence, time away from siblings, making friends, talking to peers, loving showing off what they have made, opportunity to try activities they wouldn't normally be able to, vocalising more and being understood.



*“I know it sounds cliché, but this Summer Scheme has meant everything to our family. There are very limited options for children with additional needs to avail of during the summer months. Tobin have been fantastic and so accommodating. It means so much that his voice is listened to, and his choices are valid. He has learnt his consent matters, something that he isn't afforded in other settings. This has helped his confidence massively”.*

## Youth Club

Youth Club was launched in September 2021 with two sessions and a core of 20 children attending. There are now three youth club sessions held on Wednesday evenings for three different age groups and a core of 35 children attending. Youth Club offers the children a safe environment to engage socially with their peers. A range of games and activities are available for the children and adequate support staff to facilitate play and engagement with others.



*“She continues to require help and support with her additional needs but always feels happy coming to her youth club and more importantly is happy for me to leave her which is a massive step forward in her independence”.*

## 4.1.2 Family Together Activities

Family Together Activities enable the whole family to participate in activities together and spend family time outside of the home in an environment that is tailored to their needs.

**Family targets and actual figures:**

### Families, Children and Siblings reached

	Number of families	No. of Registered Children	Number of Siblings
Target (end of 5 years)	<b>71/79 families</b>	<b>82 children</b>	<b>92 siblings</b>
Year 1	<b>68 families</b>	<b>93 children</b>	<b>70 siblings</b>
Year 2	<b>124 families</b>	<b>168 children</b>	<b>128 siblings</b>
Year 3 (June 2022)	<b>148 families</b>	<b>190 children</b>	<b>162 siblings</b>

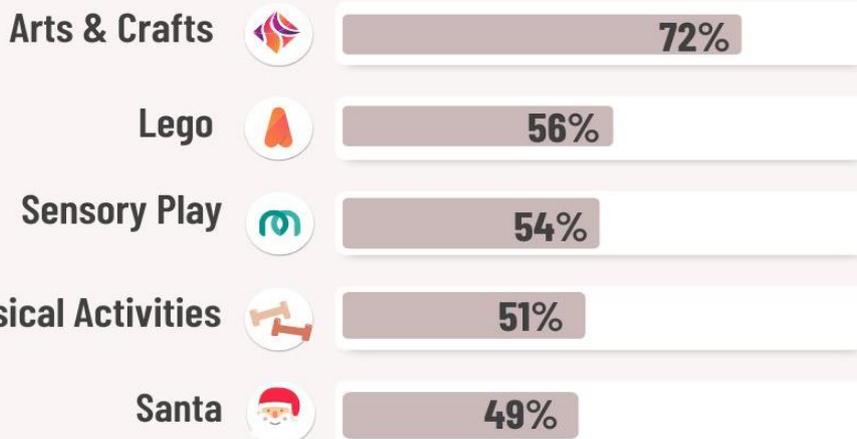
In June 2022, there are a total of 148 registered families, 190 registered children and 162 siblings. At this mid-point in the five-year programme, The BASE @ Tobin is greatly exceeding the targets set.

Family Days are hosted every two weeks, to include an optional activity for everyone. These activities include Lego, clay, art, magic shows, cooking, drumming, gymnastics and yoga. There really is something for all the family to enjoy and at Christmas there was a Santa visit. Parents/Carers can chat over some light refreshments while the children are participating in the various activities.



### Family Activities

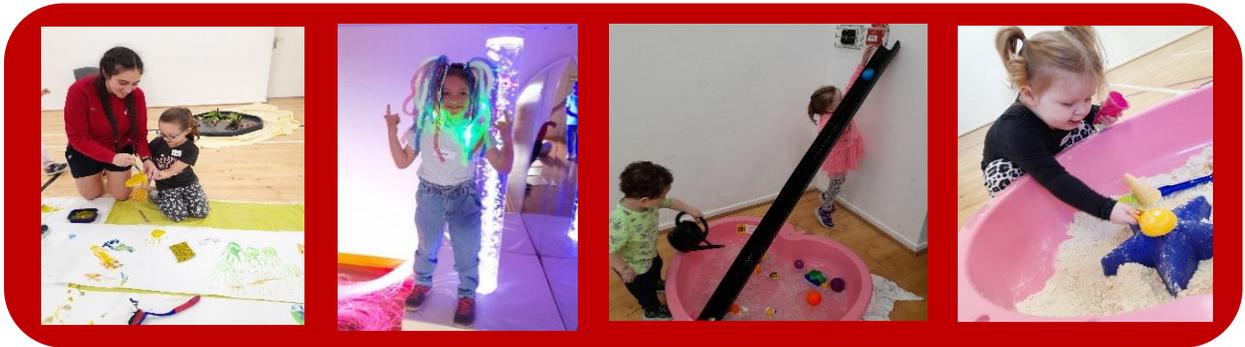
What children enjoyed the most



**Other:** Music 44%, Magic Show 44%, Puppet Show 33%, Digital Music 31%, Gardening 31%. Trips 28%  
Circus skills 26%, Casey's Creatures 26%, Online Activities 21%

The sensory room is set up during all family days, helping develop the children's senses through special lighting, visuals sounds and the use of objects. Time in the sensory room helps children to self-regulate.

Sensory Days are also held regularly, providing an excellent opportunity to get messy and join in the fun with water, foam, oats, coloured rice, moon dough, paint and chalk to create a sensory experience for all the children.



This family integration has allowed participants to feel more connected and part of a wider group. It has significantly contributed to combatting the loneliness and isolation often felt when a child receives a diagnosis.

The programme has allowed participants opportunities to socialise and meet friends in a safe and welcoming environment and develop positive relationships with support staff and peers. As a result of the programme, young people reported improved listening skills, which can be credited to the staff's approach to facilitating communication and promoting active listening.

Young people have enhanced self-esteem, social skills and communication skills as a result of increased opportunities to socialise.

Staff are very aware of behaviours and different personalities and know how to maintain effective boundaries whilst engaging the young people to reach their full potential.



One of the legacies of the pandemic when staff, young people and families were apart, is the wonderful feature chair they created in their new sensory garden using stones that families painted during lockdown. The sensory garden was an excellent addition, enabling families to come together outside during the easing of lockdown restrictions.



### 4.1.3 Strengthening Connections

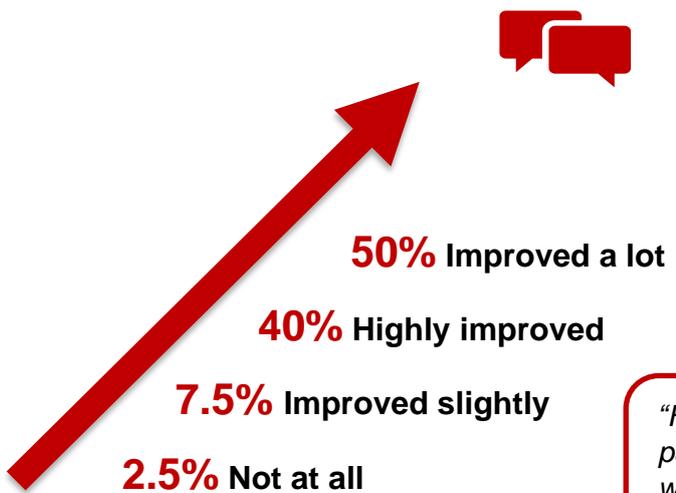
Increased social and communication skills contribute to the overall well-being of young people and family members have developed relationships outside the project, which is an essential legacy of strengthening connections and improving support networks of children with additional needs in Mid Ulster.

Improvement in relationships with their peers, families, support networks and communities			
Highly improved	Improved a lot	Improved slightly	Not at all
32.5%	<b>47.5%</b>	20%	0%



*“An opportunity to socialise with other adults and also for the kids it is amazing, and they love it. They feel safe and as a parent I feel very supported by the staff. Thank you”.*

### 4.1.4 Improvement in child/children’s behaviour in school and family settings.



*“Her relationship with her brother has improved greatly. My daughter interacts with her older brother more than ever when she attends the Tobin Centre”.*

*“He is learning how to self-regulate. He feels part of the community, he can attend without worrying how things will go. There is zero rejection no matter how the evening goes”.*

## 4.2 Outcome 2 Achievements

### Outcome 2: Young people with additional needs will have improved health and well-being

#### WHAT DID WE DO?



Confidence improved by **90%**



Young people feel happier by **100%**



Physical activities enjoyed: **9/10**



*“The activities are engaging and stimulating for both my children. They've loved all the sessions they have attended”.*

#### 4.2.1 Young people attending activities

Having launched the programme in January 2020, Covid 19 restrictions meant the Tobin Centre temporarily closed its doors two months later on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Between April 2020 and August 2020, The BASE @ Tobin delivered a vast range of activities for families using a private Facebook Group. These included art and craft, drumming, cooking, fun fitness, storytelling, dance, yoga, meditation, live music, family quiz, bingo and magic shows.

The BASE also engaged Fresh Minds Education to make a bespoke Mind Boosting Box for each registered family. Fresh Minds Education specialises in Emotional Health, Mental Health and Resilience.

*“Thank you so much for the wonderful box of delights. What a fantastic surprise during this horrible time. Your organisation has been brilliant. The programmes that are on Facebook are amazing. You really are helping the more vulnerable especially at a time when they are almost “forgotten”, for that alone we are grateful. Keep doing what you are doing xx”.*

Face-to-face activities resumed in August 2020 under strict Covid 19 family bubbles and social distancing guidelines. However, another lockdown ensued in October 2020, and the Tobin Centre remained closed until June 2021. Since then, we have organised 31 family days, including two trips to Airtastic and Armagh Planetarium. Feedback has been very positive and indicates how much the children enjoy attending face to face activities.

#### 4.2.2 Young people's confidence improved



Confidence improved by **90%**



*"He feels more confident in small group sessions and has really enjoyed mixing with his peers without being labelled as bold or not listening when he simply doesn't have the concentration levels for large group settings. Thank you, this has been such a great addition to my child's life".*

#### 4.2.3 Young people feel happier after attending activities



**100%** of young people feel happier after attending activities

*"She comes out smiling ear to ear and can't wait to the next one".*

*"Activities have boosted confidence which in turn has led to them being happier in themselves."*

#### 4.2.4 Young people participated in physical activities

Participants took part in a range of health and fitness activities. Parents noted that many young people got involved in other physical activities outside the programme, strengthening the importance of this element of the programme.

Have activities improved your child/children's health and wellness?			
Highly improved	Improved a lot	Improved slightly	Not at all
<b>47.5%</b>	37.5%	15%	0%



*"My daughter runs in now to her youth club so excited. She has had episodes of anxiety whilst in the care of Tobin staff as a result of her ASD, but they have had sufficient training and understanding of autism to enable them to deal with these appropriately and calmly".*

## Other benefits noticed by parents:



## Feedback from young people:

Feedback from the children themselves is crucial to ensure that the programme continues to meet their expectations and needs. It is important to give them a voice and enable them to contribute to the design and delivery of the project. Several methods of evaluation were completed with the children throughout the programme.

### How the young people feel about the BASE @ Tobin?

Happy



New friends



Learn new things



Fun



### Young people would like to see more:

Apex legends, pool table, basketball, Mario, paint, dance, the pig goes pop, table tennis, drafts, books, soccer, cooking, baking, farming games, games, the big hall, trampoline, reading and going outside.

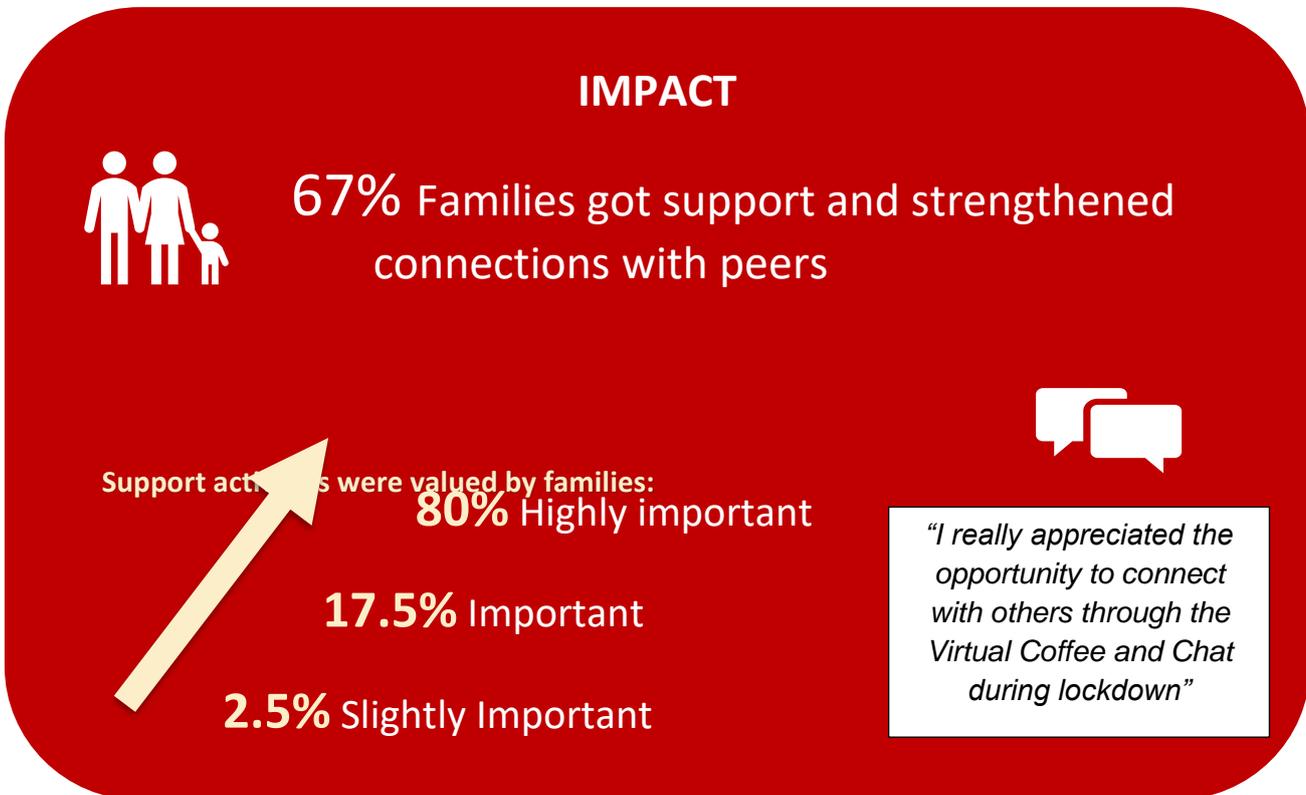


### Young people would like to see less:

Xbox, switch, schoolwork, PE and maths.

### 4.3 Outcome 3 Achievements

#### Outcome 3: Improved support networks of children with additional needs in rural Mid Ulster



#### 4.3.1 Families who strengthen connections with their peers through an awareness of shared isolation.

#### **Family strengthened connections with families, staff, and other professionals through attending activities at the BASE @ Tobin: Parents scored support 9/10.**

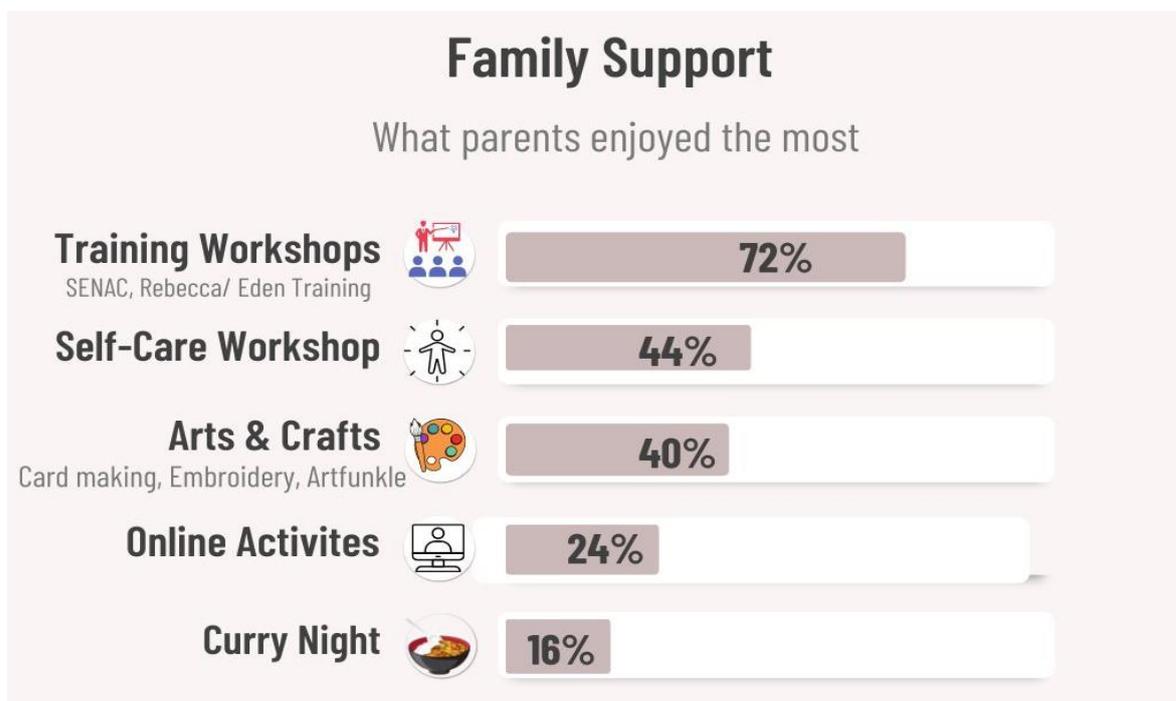
Parent Support Group provides an opportunity for parents/carers to come together to chat about any issues or concerns they have and share knowledge and experience of help and support available. Above all, it allows them to engage with others who can genuinely empathise with them.

Before lockdown in March 2020, The BASE @ Tobin facilitated a total of 7 Parent Support Group meetings with 48 parents attending.

Throughout lockdown, there was a fortnightly virtual coffee with a core of 6 parents attending. Having listened to their shared experiences of children's regression throughout lockdown, The BASE @ Tobin enlisted the help of a play therapist to provide support with techniques

parents/carers could use to help their children through the many challenges of this period. These sessions were delivered over Zoom.

Parent Support Groups continued virtually until children returned to school in September 2021. With the return of fortnightly face-to-face meetings, a range of activities were included - Baking, Self-Care Workshops, Halloween Embroidery and Christmas Card Making. In 2022, this was extended to include Training Workshops and Social Evenings. At the end of June 2022, we had a total of 247 participants at these support groups.



*“It has been great for my child, but also for me. I have received the support from other parents when it was needed”.*

*“Yes, I have met other mothers of the kids that go to youth club, we now go for a walk when the children are in youth club. This is a very useful time for us to discuss our children and learn from one another’s experiences, all as parents of children with additional needs. It is great support to meet with parents who understand”.*



*“It has saved my life and mental health and my kids. Just by being somewhere we can go as a family and have that support so I can spend time one to one with my 4 kids as they play with the team”.*

### 4.3.2 Young people have more resilient families to support them

**Families stated that their resilient levels as a result of attending the BASE @Tobin Programme were**

**$\frac{9}{10}$**

In response to feedback from our parents/carers, The BASE @ Tobin organised a number of training workshops. Rebecca McCullough has delivered these face-to-face from Eden Consultancy. Rebecca is an autism, behaviour and emotional well-being consultant with many years of experience teaching children with additional support needs. The parents/carers also attended online training with Fiona O'Donnell from the Special Educational Needs Advice Centre (SENAC) to explain the SEN system in NI and how parents can get support for their children in school. This training session was well received and helped parents/carers to feel more informed and, in turn, more supported.



*"Thanks so much for organising the training – it was extremely useful. It is sometimes difficult to even know what to ask but I feel as if I have a clear direction now".*

**The training sessions also facilitated sharing experiences as part of the learning process.**



*"I feel more confident – talking and sharing stories within the class." "I hope classes continue - They are my life".*

The BASE @ Tobin is an active steering group member for The Empower Project and therefore has a close working relationship with both Empower and DADS (Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Support). The BASE @ Tobin is also a member of the Mid Ulster Disability Forum (MUDF), the Locality Planning Group for the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) and Magherafelt/Cookstown Action for Children Family Support Hub Network. This partnership working provides great networking opportunities with a wide range of organisations and groups who are working towards the inclusivity of people with disabilities and their carers.

Excellent links have also been made with Parenting NI, Fresh Minds Education, BEAM Creative Network, GOLD Surestart in Cookstown and Solas in Belfast.

*“Before registering with the Base at the Tobin Centre I felt very alone & isolated. I was unsure where I could actually go with my little girl that she would enjoy but since my registration she has enjoyed so many family fun days together with myself, my husband & her older brother. I have learnt so much about the resources & support that are available for my daughter & my whole family. It is an invaluable support for so many local families”.*

*We (GOLD Surestart) have reduced our support group meetings (for parents whose child/ren has an additional need/disability) from weekly to once monthly due to low uptake. We feel your group has impacted greatly on this and this is brilliant, you are providing a much-needed service that can support many more people than we can as you are not restricted by the funding criteria that we are i.e. having a child under 4yrs and postcode restrictions. I have referred many parents to your service and they all report it is a brilliant service”.*

#### 4.3.3 Volunteers:



A total of seven people has engaged in volunteering activities throughout the first half of this programme, and they have clearly valued this opportunity.

***“I really enjoy volunteering – adding to the community. It makes me feel I am useful”.***

***“I feel good about reaching out to someone else when they are in need and helping the centre”.***

## 5.0 Staff Acknowledgement

The role and approach of The BASE @ Tobin staff has had a huge part to play in the success of this programme to date. The patient and supportive nature of the staff team has been instrumental in establishing genuine and positive relationships with the registered children and their families.



*"I feel Supported by the team at Tobin, the service they provide is priceless to our family, and that it is one of the first places where my child has a voice of her own".*



***"The staff are so amazing and patient and so supportive and always there for advice or help with the children".***



*"The staff are amazing, their knowledge and approach to individual situation are beyond words. Nothing ever seems a problem. They have so much empathy and compassion for my son. They thoroughly get him."*



***"Tobin has been a life saver in so many ways. Somewhere local to meet parents in a similar situation and children to play and be involved with no judgement. The staff are amazing".***

*"We have needed all the help and support with our child as it's been a learning curve for us all with her additional learning needs. We could not recommend Tobin any higher. It's truly such a benefit to all children and families".*

## 6.0 Challenges

The Programme Manager and support staff have adapted to overcome several challenges over the last two and a half years, particularly with the COVID pandemic.

### 6.1 Covid restrictions

Due to COVID restrictions between April 2020 and August 2020, the Base @ Tobin was challenged to deliver a range of activities for families using a private Facebook Group. Online activities included art and craft, drumming, cooking, fun fitness, storytelling, dance, yoga, meditation, live music, family quiz, bingo and magic shows.



Risk assessments were conducted, and all measures put in place to safely return to the centre for a brief period during August and September 2020. Three family together activities were delivered during this time – Go Fly Your Kite, Art Funkle and Lego. Unfortunately, Halloween activities had to resort to online delivery and resources were posted directly to families.

Zoom was piloted for Santa calls with families in December 2020 as it enabled two-way communication and engagement. The participant feedback was very positive, and some particularly liked the option to have their camera off. From January 2021 until May 2021, Zoom was the chosen method of engaging with families online.



During lockdown, phone calls were made to families to check in with them, hear how they were getting on and ask them what help and support they needed. In response to the feedback received some one-to-one interventions were introduced for some of the children who were struggling the most.

On a positive note, moving activities online allowed the project to deliver more activities than the original budget would have allowed for, considering all the costs associated with being at

the centre. It also meant that the children could participate in the comfort of their own homes. As a result, a much wider range of activities was carried out compared to the original plan for the first two years.

## 6.2 Complex needs

Staff linked in with Solas in Belfast, to learn from their experience of delivering Summer Schemes. This was invaluable and helped staff have more confidence in their approach and ensure they had the appropriate level of support for the attending children, specifically those with more complex needs.

## 6.3 Adaptability

The staff have learned the importance of adaptability over the last two years. They have felt more confident in delivering online activities using Zoom to enable them to interact with families. They have continued to tailor the programme to serve the children best. In doing so, they decided to no longer deliver facilitated activities on a Tuesday night for the younger children. They found that they had little or no interest in the actual activity and instead, they wanted the freedom to play and engage with the other children.

Therefore, it was decided that the younger independent activity was incorporated into an extended Youth Club on a Wednesday. There are now three sessions: P1-P3, P4-P7 and Year 8 and above. There are sufficient support workers available to support all the children, but especially the younger ones and those with the most complex needs. In seeking feedback from the children on what else they would like from The BASE @ Tobin, a library and a reading corner has now been established.



## 6.4 Underspend

Year one had an overall underspend of £30k or 22% on the project due to delivery of activities online. This underspend was used to invest in IT, Youth Club equipment, internal and external works and building enhancements (CCTV, Lighting, Heating) to Tobin Centre.

At the end of year two, the underspend was significantly less, £2,813 (4%) and in year three, the spending is in line with the budget available.

## 7.0 Conclusions and recommendations for future work

The project has progressed well across all activity areas intended to contribute to the outcomes. The Tobin Centre is based upon the principles of community development and active participation, as well as community and individual capacity building. The centre has identified and responded to local needs actively and responsibly within the limits of the available funding.

The people consulted for this evaluation reported extensive development across all three outcomes. The project was promoted well through established channels, including key partners, and referrals came from various sources.

This programme provides young people with additional needs with an opportunity to participate in an intervention which allows them to develop friendships and integrate into a wider community. The creative setting and approach of the programme, alongside the adaptable and effective programme staff, have significantly contributed to the overall success. The programme is now mid-way to completion, and its successes so far provide a sense of comfort and excitement as to what lies ahead. It is evident that the children will certainly have long-lasting benefits from this wonderful programme.

**The top words used to describe the project below are:**



Families were asked which of the services on offer were most important to them. The results have demonstrated that all three aspects of the programme are equally important to them.

<b>The importance of the following services:</b>					
	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Not very important</b>	<b>Less important</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>Independent Youth Activities</b>	<b>85%</b>	10%	0%	0%	5%
<b>Family Together Activities</b>	<b>85%</b>	10%	2.5%	0%	2.5%
<b>Parent/Carer Support Activities</b>	<b>80%</b>	20%	2.5%	0%	0%

**Independent Youth Activities**



*“Promoting independence and providing these teenagers an opportunity to mix and have a social space is essential to their lives”.*

**Family Together Activities**



*“My family has really benefited from the family sessions. It allows us all to spend time together in a place that understands our son who has autism. It makes us all feel so relaxed, and both my sons love it. The staff are amazing and always on hand to help”.*

**Parent/ Carer Support Activities**



*“It’s very important and greatly beneficial for parents of children with disabilities and learning difficulties, to get together and share their experiences and coping mechanisms”.*

Following reflection on the evaluation of the delivery of the programme to date, the following recommendations have been suggested under each of the three outcomes.

## 7.1 Outcome 1 Recommendation and Action

### Outcome 1: Young people will attend and attend independently of the parent/family support

The project's success to date is underpinned significantly by the staff who carry out these independent activities. These activities are precious to the young people and their families in such a welcoming venue where their children have gained great friendship and support.

1

The project has widely supported young people to become more independent, engaged, strengthen connections with peers and improve behaviours. It would be a good idea to extend the number of independent activities as they are enjoyed by the children, are appreciated so much, and will accommodate any one-to-one requirements.

2

If behaviours in school are to be monitored, it would be beneficial to have teachers do a baseline on a set number of children to compare some children's 1-5 years journey with the programme. Support workers could discuss with teachers about preparing case studies.

3

There is a high number of families registered for the programme. A waiting list may be needed for families going forward to ensure the numbers are capped to child: support worker ratio.

4

Other suggestions by staff: Older young people given life skills such as using cash at shops, folding clothes, self-care, letter writing and placing food orders. Make a study area and have small groups of Maths and English classes with a breakout sensory room. More shared space for support workers and parents to interact. A higher budget may be needed to support this, such as additional support workers attending some family support sessions and family days.

5

Some staff feel overwhelmed at times due to many young people having complex needs. Training, sharing best practice and learning should be continuous to support staff in assisting with such complex needs.

6

Some management staff are lone workers and need some team building post COVID with the support workers.

7

Parents thought a purpose-built sensory room is a good idea, saying it would be better to have an allocated space for a sensory room so items don't need to be stored away and rebuilt again by staff, suggesting it could be used for birthday parties, fun days, family outings and fundraising events.

8

Parents suggested bringing an additional friend when they only have one child. A shopping experience to learn how to buy something; more social skills training; a DJ session that the children could provide the music themselves; more trips over summer etc days out to zoo, beach; more trips, spend more day times with Tobin centre, sports activities; possible weekend sessions to offer 1:1 help with children with particularly severe additional needs so that their parent/guardian can have a short break for a coffee/tea and bite to eat; specific interest clubs for older children; something for teenage ASD (higher ability) and more hours for independent attendance.

9

To give knowledge of some of the activities beforehand to prepare children for the following week, so they can talk about it and use it as a motivator at home.

10

More gardening, cooking and supporting good eating habits, healthy choices, health and exercise. "I would like to see more outdoor play or even water activities, exploring nature". "Activity variety is great so add more baking activities – the children just love this and healthy cooking. Food for Mood chats to encourage healthy eating at home".

*"A purpose-built sensory room was a great idea with many children having sensory-seeking behaviours. The sensory room can be very relaxing and calming so some parents suggested consideration to the equipment added to include equipment for movement, pressure and feelings such as suspended swings, trampolines and vibrating pillows. Movement breaks have been very beneficial for some children to self-regulate so yoga balls would be great too".*

*"More life skills classes would be beneficial, such as managing and understanding money, safety in public, safety awareness and tidying up".*

***"I wish Youth Club was longer, even 90 minutes rather than 60 minutes".***

***"Extra tutoring in Maths and English would be beneficial".***

*"During family days maybe staff could help the mums get a cuppa tea and be with the children 1-1 – especially those who don't want to leave the mum".*

## 7.2 Outcome 2: Recommendations and Action

### Outcome 2: Young people with additional needs will have improved health and wellbeing

1

Support workers have been instrumental in assigning little tasks to some of the older children at the end of activities so that they are seen as “Mini Leaders” on the project. This approach ensures that they can fully participate and enjoy the activity, but they also have a sense of trust and responsibility too. This role should continue to be developed and offer older children some training to improve their confidence and social skills.

2

The independent activities, physical activities and family days are very popular. Efforts to reach the most isolated young people should continue with the offer of some social trips or home visits for those who disengage.

3

It has been recognised that under 4’s need support too as many have been referred to the programme. The age limitations need discussion with funders and committee.

4

There is a noticeable difference in health trusts assessments of the young people. NHSCT may take 4 years to diagnose support needs and SHSCT could take 6 -12 months. Discussion of best practices of SHSCT should be directed to NHSCT as many young people and parents are losing out in receiving support at the right time.

5

Those with additional support needs have less activity and no extra curriculum such as physical activity so they are less active and can suffer health issues. It is important to always keep on the programme healthy eating and physical activities.

### 7.3 Outcome 3 Recommendations and Action

#### Outcome 3: Improved support networks of children with additional needs in rural Mid Ulster

1

The family support has been very beneficial. It is important that family members have a continued voice on matters that concern them, and some parents even suggested additional evening workshops or support for parents.

2

Delivery of the programme online during COVID was a challenge but many families adapted well to the online activities. Some have never returned to face-to-face meetings and online activities suited many of them better. When asked about continuing online sessions, 38% of parents would like some activities online. Parents felt online was good for listening-based activities such as training, viewing presentations, tuning into talks etc. It would be useful to have some hybrid activities to ensure some housebound families had access to information and support or factsheets emailed or given to parents after face-face meetings. Others suggested it would be good if some online workshops were held in the evening.

3

Magherafelt/Cookstown Action for Children Family Support Hub Network. The mission of the hub is to provide support to families and children in the Cookstown/Magherafelt area by working together as a coalition of agencies to provide early intervention services. The BASE @ Tobin have received a significant number of referrals from this hub network. Further links should be established with Autism NI, Superstars, The HUB, schools or youth clubs to continue partnership working and sharing success stories.

4

Low uptake on daytime sessions for parents was observed and more parents who are working tend to reach out for support more. There should be encouragement to ask parents to co-design future sessions and find out suitable times and explore barriers to involvement. It was suggested that more activities post covid to re-engage parents is needed.

5

Encouragement in the future needs to involve parents to support funding and develop future activity plans. Families should continue to be empowered to play their part in continuing to shape the delivery of projects locally and address sustainability.

6

Meet up with Parkeneur and Willowbank for best practice visits to find out what works well and share learnings.

7

Parents of younger children found the workshops more beneficial. Many families who had low attendance at courses say that they couldn't attend family activities or training for various reasons: rising living costs and some have to drive a longer distance; other children doing homework if in the evening; if training was in the morning some other children in the family were off sick from school; mental health issues, anxiety, speech therapy on at the same time; from Easter to September parents do dancing lessons, some parents were tired and own illnesses; other parents had training from the health trust many years ago and they have built their knowledge and skills over a 10 year period.

## 8.0 Building on success

The overall effectiveness of the BASE @ Tobin programme was reported to be **98%** very effective.

### 8.1 Establishing Formal Partnerships

To build on the success delivered to date, as the project moves into its next few years of delivery, it is recommended that formal partnerships, shared learning and co-design approaches are explored with NHSCT and SHSCT, ensuring they value the key position in shaping and steering future initiatives designed for young people with additional support needs.

The project has evolved and identified key areas of consideration for future delivery outlined above across the three outcome areas. Evidence suggests there is a high demand for services and activities and the Tobin Centre needs to address how the project evolves and is sustained beyond the original funded period.



### 8.2 Tobin Centre Values

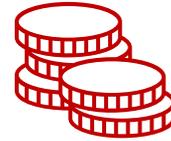
The project is positively contributing to the values of the Tobin Centre and parents strongly agreed:



### 8.3 Future Fundraising

**63%** of parents would be interested in helping with future fundraising.

Parents gave other fundraising ideas below:



- Bingo, Barbecue
- Cake sale - Bake sale or coffee mornings
- Car wash, Car runs, Colour runs, Fun run, Tractor runs, Truck runs
- Car boot sale
- Cash for kids
- Corporate events to raise funds, such as a Black-Tie Gala Ball
- Community musical event as a lot of musicians in Moortown
- Dine with me night
- Donations
- Family fun days
- Football club fundraising
- Go fund me page
- Grants... looking for sponsors
- Health Department or Educational Department
- Hire out sensory room for other families
- Instagram page,
- Legacy donations
- Music night
- Recipe/cookbook with all families contributing their favourites.
- Recipe books £10 sharing family meals,
- Sponsored walks - undertaken by the children, young people & their families - wearing the colour red to represent the Base at Tobin
- Sponsor a brick
- Sponsored runs by running clubs and Charity football teams
- Silly sock day, dress-up day
- Table quiz sponsorship
- 50/50 draws - split the pot: 50/50 draw winner of draw gets half the amount and Tobin receives the other half
- Quizzes during the winter months, 5k/ 10 k run or cycles

## 8.4 Relationships

**85%** of parents value the relationship with BASE @ Tobin as excellent.

*"Keep going". "It's such a fantastic place and badly needed in every area".*

*"I love that the young people always feel secure and we as parents have peace of mind".*

*"Keep going please". I hope it's there forever". "It's a place that gives HOPE".*

*"The young people get tremendous support at a very personal level". "Keep up the great work, keep going", "Staff are unsung hero's – truly amazing". "So valued by all the family and it's a really great place to go". "This needs developed regionally to help so many families – The BASE @ Tobin is a great example for others to follow".*

*"The girls are just fabulous we are indebted to them so much". "The youth club is an hour of freedom, we can be without the children who are always looking for us". "I would be lost without them". "They are great confidence builders and very supportive". "It is an essential part of our lives". "I hope it continues".*



## 9.0 Sustainability

The BASE @ Tobin will need approximately £75,000 each year to run effectively once funding ends in 2024. The project should continue to focus on engaging and involving the hardest to reach young people with a sustainability plan to continue service provision. The plan will need to address sustainability and a detailed exit strategy focusing on future plans to keep vital activities and support for young people.

This evaluation will give the board and staff a vision to focus on future planning and growth to address the young people's needs. A fundraising strategy should be developed to identify key funds. The Tobin Centre will actively seek a continuation of funds through grants and fundraising to continue and sustain core support.

**98% of people said they would be willing to pay for future services and activities.**

**What are parents willing to pay:**

	£5	£10	£15	£20
Independent Youth Activities – Weekly Youth Club	98%	2%	0%	0%
Independent Youth Activities – Summer Scheme	17%	10%	12%	41%
Family Together Activities – Family Sessions	33%	33%	5%	2%
Parent/Carer Support Activities	35%	26%	2%	5%
Training workshops	26%	28%	7%	5%

**44% of parents were prepared to pay a monthly membership fee as well as paying for activities.** With the following amounts:

£5	£10	£15	£20
10%	22%	2%	9%

**100% of parents thought the purpose- built sensory room at Tobin was a great idea and 85% of parents would use it.** Below is how often they would use it.

Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Rarely
40%	25%	27%	12%

Below outlines parents who are interested in privately hiring the current sensory room and how much they are willing to pay for a one-hour session.

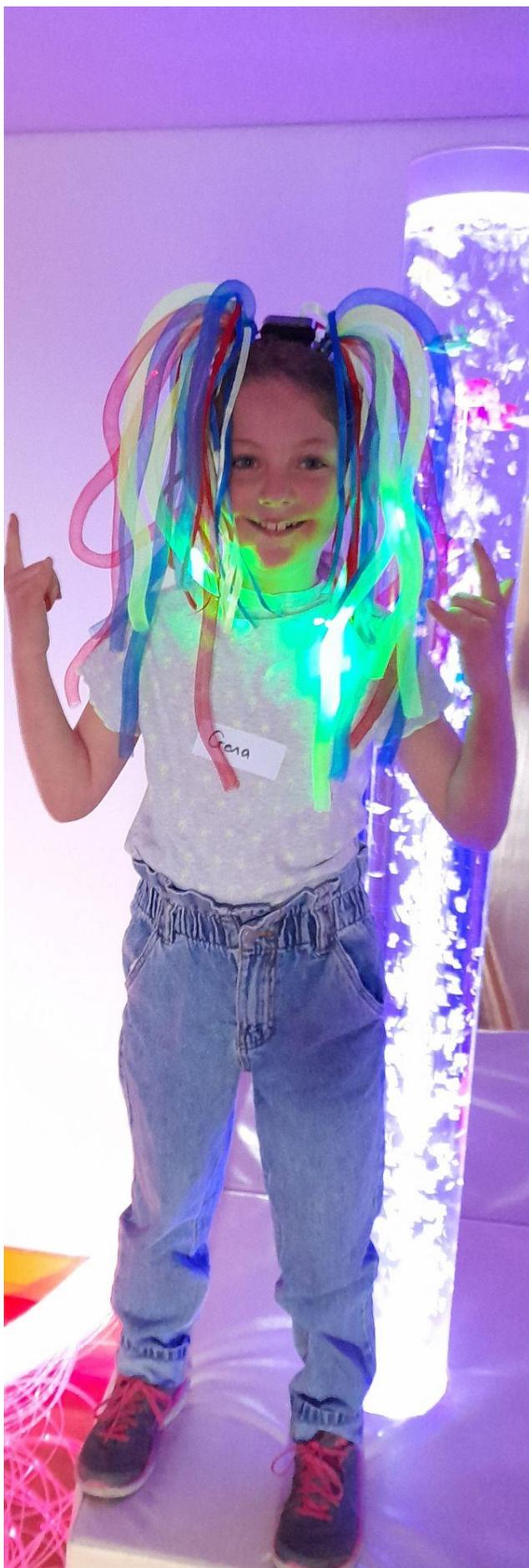
£5	£10	£15	£20
31%	45%	4%	20%

**Additional comments:**

*"A sensory room is great for all ages even parents some younger children would spend most of their time there".*

*"My daughter absolutely loves the sensory room & all it has to offer. It calms & engages her".*

*"It would be a good idea to have a subgroup for fundraising: Friends of Tobin or Buddies of Tobin to plan for the future and support the ongoing work"*



We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the people who worked tirelessly to make this impact report. Below, list down the names of contributors:

The Tobin Centre Committee  
The BASE @ Tobin Staff  
The parents, carers and families  
The support workers  
The facilitators and mentors  
The young people  
The volunteers

The external facilitator and evaluator:  
Elaine Curry



Thankyou.

## Contact



The Base @ Tobin  
The Tobin Centre  
8 Ardboe Road  
Cookstown  
BT80 0HT

[www.TobinCentre.com](http://www.TobinCentre.com)



[loretta@tobincentre.com](mailto:loretta@tobincentre.com)



[laura@tobincentre.com](mailto:laura@tobincentre.com)

[@tobincentre](https://www.facebook.com/tobincentre) 