

Suas Mentoring Programme

Phase 2 – Foundations for Growth



“Promoting Social Inclusion
through Education”

“Every time I go to Homework Club it’s my favourite day”
(Participant age 7 in Suas Homework Club with Galway Refugee
Support Service)

Suas Educational Development

Suas Educational Development is a movement dedicated to supporting quality education in under resourced communities. We support the education of 14,000 children per annum across Ireland, India and Kenya every year. Over the past number of years we have developed a range of high quality programmes in Ireland working in partnership with a network of 2200 young people across 7 college Suas Societies and the graduate alumni network.

The Challenge for Irish Education

At this time of economic uncertainty, those from disadvantaged communities face an increased risk of being left behind by the education system.

Research has shown that:

- Children from disadvantaged communities constitute the majority of those who fail to benefit from the education. An estimated 1000 children do not transfer from primary to secondary school every year. ([*National Economic and Social Forum, 'Early School Leavers Forum Report No. 24'*](#))
- Despite almost full participation of Travellers in primary education, the low achievement level of the majority ... is a matter for concern ...the vast majority of Travellers are leaving post primary schools early and without qualifications. For 50% of Travellers, primary school education is the highest level achieved. ([*Census 2002 – Volume 8 – Irish Traveller Community*](#))
- Immigrant children in Irish primary and secondary schools possess a strong motivation to learn (*Devine & Kenny, Ethnicity and Schooling A study of ethnic diversity in selected Irish primary and post-primary schools; Commissioned report for the Department of Education and Science 2002*). However studies show that 'minority language children' ... do consistently less well than their classmates born in that country to parents also born in that country.
- 1 in 3 children from a disadvantaged area leaves primary school with literacy difficulties every year. ([*Educational Research Centre, 'Literacy in Disadvantaged Primary Schools, Problems and Solutions'*](#))

There is a need for additional cost-effective, scalable interventions, complementary of the current system to ensure that these children and young people are encouraged to remain in school, complete their education, and where appropriate, aspire to enter into third level education.

In addition, the number of third level students engaged in community volunteering has decreased. There is a need for the next generation to learn the habits of responsible citizens so as to help achieve educational equality (Dunne 2002) and a society committed to that equality.

What are the Suas Mentoring Programmes?

The Suas Mentoring Programme works in partnership with community organisations and schools nationwide, as well as the Suas Societies and alumni network to support quality holistic education in Ireland.

The Mentoring Programme has 2 aims:

1. To address educational disadvantage and promote social inclusion in Ireland
2. To develop a network of informed, engaged, active citizens across Ireland

In the 09/10 academic year, 261 people from marginalised and under resourced communities benefitted from Suas Mentoring Projects supported by 150 young volunteers.

In the 10/11 academic year 9 diverse Mentoring Projects will get underway in Dublin, Cork and Galway delivering a total of 1-3 contact hours per person per week, running for an average 8 weeks each Semester over the academic year. Over 5000 hours of educational support will be received.

Who benefits from Suas Mentoring Programme?

The Mentoring Projects engage three target groups

- Children from designated disadvantaged schools
- Refugees and Asylum seekers
- Travellers

Suas Mentoring Projects support the education of these groups by;

- Supporting existing educational opportunities such as the 'Support Training and Enterprise Programme' for early school leavers and a Paired Reading initiative.
- Providing English Language and integration support to refugees/asylum seekers creating opportunities for both Irish students and refugees/asylum seekers to effectively engage socially and participate in cultural exchange.
- Homework clubs and 'Sports Ed' Projects for school children
- Improving access to and attitudes towards third level education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds by providing peer- to peer mentoring.

Service Learning...building active citizens.

By engaging third level students with 'service-learning' Programmes such as the Suas Mentoring Programme in partnership with Suas College Societies and Graduate Alumni, we plan to foster leadership skills and a volunteering culture in young people as well as a deeper understanding of educational disadvantage and inequalities in Ireland. The longer-term expected benefit is that volunteers will continue their engagement with social issues thereby building a generation of socially committed leaders of the future.

Going Forwards

Suas Mentoring Programme has entered into phase two of what is seen as a three phase growth model detailed in the table below. The first three years of Suas mentoring initiatives were characterized by rapid and organic growth with moderate support from Suas core body. While the Mentoring Projects showed potential, there were challenges to sustainability. Key areas such as programme development, monitoring and evaluation were minimal.

Over the past year the Suas Office has begun to address these issues and increase its support level focusing on high potential mentoring projects. Suas is currently seeking funding to further develop this pilot support model and lay the foundations to move towards expansion and sustained growth of these mentoring projects nationwide.

<p>2006 - 2008 Phase 1: Start Up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rapid & Organic Growth – less focus ▪ Low level of support from Suas Office. ▪ Informal monitoring & evaluation ▪ Short term focus => unsustainable in medium – long term 	<p>2009 - 2011 Phase 2: Foundations for Growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build on lessons of phase 1 ▪ Focus on increasing quality & impact of few projects ▪ Packaging of content and training ▪ Systemization of monitoring & evaluation ▪ Increased support level from Suas Office ▪ Longer term focus – movement towards sustainable projects 	<p>2011 - 2013 Phase 3: Sustained Growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build on lessons of phase 2 ▪ High quality packaged projects & training rolled out nationwide ▪ Full time programme support & development team in Suas Office ▪ High quality monitoring and evaluation techniques across all projects ▪ Projects sustainable in long term ▪ Movement towards deeper engagement within communities & towards policy change.
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Testimonials

“I get help with homework and talk to my friends. When I’m older I want to come to DCU to be a movie maker. So say if you’re in secondary school and you’re really good... you might get a scholarship. I want to do that.” **(Megan Age 11, Suas DCU Society Homework Club Participant from St. Josephs School Ballymun)**

“Every time I come to Homework Club it’s my favourite day.” **(Participant age 7, Suas Homework Club at Lisbrook House with Galway Refugee Support Service)**

“Coming to DCU children a chance to see that university is a place for everyone and not a place to be in awe of.” **(Kirsty, Secretary of the School of Education & Training DCU, and Suas Society Volunteer)**

“I got involved with the project because I think education is really important and I wanted to work with children. They love it here and are really growing in confidence.” **(Feena Cunnane, Volunteer in Suas NUIG Society, Galway speaking about the Suas Homework Club with Galway Refugee Support Service)**



Mentoring Programmes in action*: Student from St. Joseph's School in Ballymun at the graduation Ceremony for the Sports-Ed Mentoring Programme in DCU (left), Homework Club at Galway Refugee Centre (top right), DCU Sports-Ed homework session (bottom right)

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