

Perspectives on Poverty:

Poems from children and
young people in Tallaght



Childhood
Development
Initiative



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"Sisterhood"
by Tommy Fitzpatrick

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Introduction

The Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) has been working in Tallaght to improve outcomes for children since 2007. As part of our evidence informed approach, we regularly check in with the community to understand needs, identify new and emerging issues and agree the best responses. In 2019, we undertook research regarding the prevalence and experience of poverty, culminating in the publication of *Over the Fence* (Shumba et al, 2021). This report offers important insights into the perspectives of children and young people, and indicated areas which require greater attention from service providers.

We wanted to delve deeper in our understanding of poverty and stress and knew the power of creativity in unlocking our capacity to articulate experiences. This publication offers us a window through which to glimpse the world from a younger perspective.

About Clifton Redmond

Clifton Redmond holds a B.A. in Humanities from Saint Patrick's College, Carlow, and an MPhil. in creative writing from Trinity College, Dublin. He has had success with numerous poems published nationally, and internationally. He has won several awards, most notably the Irish Chair of Poetry Award.

He regularly works as a socially engaged artist, often among vulnerable groups. He has worked in partnership with Creative Ireland, Take Apart Carlow, Youth Reach Carlow, St. Catherine's Traveller Development Programme, Carlow County Council Arts Office, Kildare County Arts Office, and The Arts Council of Ireland.

He is currently serving as Take Apart Carlow Community Writer in Residence which aims at delivering workshops in creative writing, projects, public readings and mentoring programmes which are all aimed at reaching otherwise marginalised members of society.

About Foróige

Foróige works with over 50,000 young people across Ireland every year. At the heart of the organisation is a belief in the potential of each young person. Foróige empowers young people to develop their own abilities and attributes, to think for themselves, to make things happen and to contribute to their community and society. This is done through a broad and varied range of programmes, supports and initiatives that involve young people in their own development and in the development of their community.

Foróige is for all young people, but has particular strategies and initiatives in place to engage and support vulnerable young people. Foróige staff and volunteers create safe, friendly spaces where young people can feel welcomed and be themselves within their own communities. This includes the Foróige Youth Café at the Big Picture in Tallaght. Young people from the Café were involved in the creation of this book, through their participation in poetry workshops and the creation of some of the artwork contained within these pages.



About Citywise Education

Citywise Education has provided educational support to young people in West Tallaght for twenty-five years. The organisation aims to improve communities through youth education and is committed to improving communities by working with young people to develop the whole person through academic support and personal development. Citywise Education understands the ever-changing needs of young people from the community and continues to excel in responding to those needs.



Explanatory Note

The focus of the poetry workshops was on poverty. In order to facilitate the children and young people's participation, they were encouraged to create a fictional character and/or place. The writing included in this publication does not therefore necessarily represent the realities of the lives of those who engaged in the project.

Acknowledgements

This book was made possible through funding from the Tusla Participation grant, for which we are extremely grateful. Many thanks to the staff and volunteers at Citywise Education and Foróige, for facilitating our engagement with the young people and supporting them through this process.

Huge thanks to the wonderful Clifton Redmond, the poet whose enthusiasm and integrity enabled the children and young people to engage in this creative process with trust.

And of course, our admiration and appreciation of the children and young people who took the brave step of opening up, sharing and delving. We are in debt to their creativity, courage and honesty.

Section 1:

Poems by 8 to 12 year old children

The Mouse in the House

Jeffery was a mouse
who was looking for a house.
He tried an old, abandoned car,
but that just wasn't right.
He tried and tried but nothing worked.
Just then he looked behind him
and saw a hotel full of people
and he said 'not in a million years'.
But it started to rain, so he went in
and found a little hole in the wall
to spend the night.
He thought to himself
I think I found a home.

Sienna

Teddy

Teddy was a wizard bear,
he loved apples.
Whenever he went out,
he would buy a whole pack of them.
He loved to make apple pie.
But something terrible happened...
All the apples were sold out!
Teddy was so mad that he turned evil.
He destroyed the whole of
Cherry Town.
But then he found lots of
apple trees.
He rebuilt the whole of
Cherry Town
and lived happily ever after.

Robyn

Fairies

I was walking through the forest
with intent as pure as snow,
when suddenly I looked
where a fairy flew down low.
It handed me a flower
then very swiftly said,
'this pretty little flower
is for your pretty little head'.

Eve

The Running Man

The running man is fast
but the walking man is slow.
So the running man helped him
be comfortable
by giving him magic running shoes.

Eamann

She Helped

She broke her leg,
so she begged for medicine.
She gave food to bake pepois.

Riley

Luigi the 360th

Luigi the 360th is a thousand
and nine hundred years old
but his mom said he's
really bold
because his sister told.
Now he has to grow a seed
as a good deed.

Layla



Section 2: Poems by 12 to 15 year old children

Swagger

Swagger became a platypus
before he was an octopus.
Swagger helped an old lady
but she called him lazy.
He saved people and then
they called him purple.
He said, 'no I'm blue.'
Then they said 'no,
you're from a zoo.'
'Why are you so mean?
Is it because my
hat's too clean?'
'yes, you're too clean for me.'

Evie

In a World of Swag

In a world of swag,
we're on top of the game
rocking with style,
making our fame.
With confidence and flair,
we shine so bright.
swag is our superpower,
day and night.

Evie

Fluffy Loves Mangos

Fluffy wanted to share her love
for mangos
but no one wanted to try it.
Down she went for more
mangos while playing a banjo.
All she wanted to do was to help people.
So she shared some mangos
with the people in need,
by having a mango party
with the people she pleased.

Eileen

Deon's Mouse

Deon works at soup kitchens day and night
hoping to make some more.
He goes home after a long day
only to find a funny looking mouse.

Deon checks closer and sees some rubble.
His happiness pops just like a bubble.
He decides to help the poor mouse
not knowing that the rubble was his house.

Deon's muscles grew and grew
only because the night before
he drank a special brew.

When he saved the poor mouse
he said 'that was my house!'
The mouse revealed itself
to be a magical tree.

The tree said 'since you were so nice to me
your new house will be a tree'.
Then the mouse changed itself into a tree house.
Now what used to be a mouse is now a house.

Ejidion

Irish Dancing

Do Irish dancing to make money
and donate it to a charity
and read people's minds
so she knows if people are being good
and not being bad stuff.

Ruby

Roar

Roar is an interesting person
who likes pineapple on pizza.

One day a lady said 'oh please help.'

'No' said Roar.

Roar said 'ladies these days are crazy.'

She went home to watch Bugs Bunny.

Outside Roar's window

was a cat stuck in a tree.

Then the cat looked at Roar and said

'he can help.' Then Roar saw

and spawned in the roasting skeleton

and Roar started roasting bread.

What a day.

Carla

Elise

Buildings are tall, buildings are small
The sky shines a dark blue glass
People are seen left and right
But a small lime green house

Bright as the moon, shines a glow.
In this house a woman, young,
Paints away a drab past,
but bright future in an okay city.

A bad father, a negative mother
And no one to confide in.
In this house, she paints alone,
Phone buzzing. Her mother texts

and rings but ignore she does.
This woman, young, can sing,
But never ever sings to a soul.
This woman, young, is twenty-one,

With no one to speak to,
Feels alone, tears drip down.
Suddenly, the door opens
A friend from long ago

Appears unknown.
To start over they want.
Sadness goes
Happiness reappears.

Niamh

Frankie Scary

I am Frankie Scary, hairy,
smelly, and racist.

I live in Pooppoo City
and it's very shitty.

The buildings are shit,
the shops are shit.

And the butchers don't sell meat, they
only sell shit.

I don't help anyone,
and I am shit at cooking
because I actually cook shit
from all the shops.

I also hate all my kids
and I should not be teaching
because I threaten students,
so yeah.

Chloe

Exploring Atlantis

Exploring the ocean floor
Far away from home
Searching deep below
As the light begins to fade.

An angle fist passes by
It's the only light for miles
I reach rock bottom
And start my search.

Pearls and coins sink
as I swim back up
following the bubbles
floating gently about me

like jellyfish
there you are
sound asleep.
I place the treasures

beside you
But nothing
will ever
match your
worth.

Lovleen

That Autumn Night

I remember that autumn night
The multi coloured leaves falling from the trees
I remember their innocent eyes looking up
from the crispy, dry leaves
Their fur was no longer clean and tidy.
I pick them up, which is very easy
due to them being so small.
I notice they don't have a colour.
I look at their little eyes full of sadness and pain.
They're like a chestnut glass, half empty.
I rummage through my pocket
and find a bit of food.
I gently feed the pup,
the sadness slowly drains away.
I decide to bring them home.
I bath them and clean them up.
I've found a new best friend.

Roisin

You left me Alone

Remembering when you left
I needed help but you didn't care
I remember when I asked you
I needed you to help, to care,
to come back
You didn't. You didn't care, help,
didn't do anything.
I remember when I stopped,
stopped caring, sleeping, leaving.
I stopped everything
Remember when you left?
Soon I will too.

Sammy



"The Self: Under the skin"
by Em Phelan

No Drama

I still never know why
Why she turned on me.
Why they all did
But I'm weirdly happy
Even though I remember the laughs.
All the worrying is gone.
I'm happy they're gone.
No more drama and lots of
new better friends.

Roisin

Dark Clouds

I remember it well.
Walking home, sun setting,
car door closing.
The engine won't start.
Dark clouds sway in my head.
Panicking.
Suddenly Leah, my mate,
jumps...
in the boot, the engine starts.
I feel joy – engine works.
Dawn falls upon us.
I remember it well.

Hunter

Myself

I dreamt of a time where
I could be myself, not stress.
no worry, no fatigue.
Why I am so helpful and yet
nothing back in return.
I am a shadow of my former self.
It's me just withering away.

Hunter

Alone

During the times I feel alone
I can feel the sadness to my bone.
During the times it feels dark
I want the help though I don't
know where to start.

During the times I want to
reach out I don't want
my friends
to worry and spread
it about.

During the times
that are tough
I don't want to let myself
get stuck
In the muck.

During the times I don't know
Why, I really don't
want to let anyone catch me cry.

Alex

It Started

It started when the wind started
to blow
When I look
out the door and see a fresh
coat of snow. Though that
wasn't the only thing I see
In the distance my friend needed me
Though I didn't know what
was best, I wanted to help before
things headed west. It started
when we hung out more, and
saw that frown no longer hit the floor.
It started when the progress
was slow, though I'd never throw
their progress out the window.
It started when things got better
Even if they felt alone, I would
not let her.
It started when I saw my friend
whom needed me, now they feel
the best they can be.

Alex

Panic

I remember
when seeing
their droopy
wet eyes,
being fully
bloody red
the fear
stress
panic
all at once
fill within
my body.

Sammy

Help

In some scenarios
help won't always
be available.

I shake, I worry
and I tremble,
until they help
until they hold me
and be a bit bold.

Mike

For my Friends

I missed my chance when my bus was there
I missed my chance when I misunderstood my teachers
I missed my chance when I slept in and moped about
I never missed my chance when my friend
asked to reach out.

Chloe

What Did She Know

She knew what to do when she needed new shoes.
She knew what to do when she was lost in town.
She knew what to do when she broke her mate's pen.
She knew what to do when all she needed was
a good friend.

Chloe

I Remember

I remember the greying in her eyes
the stiffness in her body
and the sadness in her soul.

I could see the rustling of her pockets
the ripping in her clothes
and the tears in her eyes.

I could help her with her sadness
with her tears
and her soul.

She had tears of joy
she had too much hardships
and I remember the hug of overjoy.

Kai

Times of Need

In times of need
I tore myself up.
I asked for help
and just one showed up.
I cried my heart
I plead my case
they kissed my face
and helped me in time of need.
But why help me?
I'm just one of many
but you're all I am
to need, to hold. to love.

Kai

Making Sense

In some scenarios
help won't always
be available.

I shake, I worry,
and I tremble.

until they help,
until they hold me
and be a bit bold.

Xemo

On a Cold Wintry Evening

We met that cold wintry evening.
You said you were cold, so I gave you my sweater.
And when we went on that trip
you said you felt fear and thanked me a lot.
Remember when you told me your story,
your life, your trauma, I helped you,
you even helped back.

Remember when we argued,
I said sorry, even though
I shouldn't have, just to help you,
when you needed it most.
Remember when you left,
you said you had enough,
I never helped.
I never cared.
I never did anything to help.

I remember it,
but you don't.

Edae



"Outcast" by Katie Marrey





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TÚSLA An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
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