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Clones social enterprise making sensational changes in children’s lives

While the past two years have proven challenging for everyone, a leading Irish charity says the fallout of the pandemic continues to take its toll on children with additional needs and their families.

Since its launch 15 years ago, Sensational Kids has been providing affordable, accessible, and family-centred clinical and educational services and resources to children of all abilities, through therapy, training, and professional support.

Karen Leigh founded Sensational Kids in 2007 after experiencing lengthy waiting lists and a lack of affordable and accessible occupational therapy services for her son Conor. The charity provides access to therapy services and supports to children with additional needs, which is vital for a child’s optimal development.

Sensational Kids operates as a social enterprise which is an organisation that works primarily to improve the lives of children and families while reinvesting all of its profits back into the service. The business of a social enterprise is social good, which Sensational Kids contributes to with therapy sessions that are tailored to each child’s individual needs.

Therapists collaborate with children and their families to ensure activities used in

sessions can be practiced at home. While the team of professional therapists assess, diagnose, and implement a plan to help children develop their skills and reach their full potential, the therapy sessions are play-based and fun.

One child benefitting from the services Sensational Kids provides is five-year-old Ben O’Connor in Monaghan. Ben has been attending weekly occupational therapy sessions over the last couple of months to support him with his development.

Erin O’Hagan, Occupational Therapist at Sensational Kids in Clones, is helping Ben with his motor planning, coordination and fine motor skills including his writing, shapes, his pencil grip and drinking from a cup.

Discussing Ben’s progress, Erin says: “Due to Ben’s tactile defensiveness, we are working on his self-care skills such as bathing and showering in order to increase his independence with his activities of daily living. Ben has made really good progress in the past two months since attending his first therapy session. His confidence has really increased and this is supporting him with his gross, fine motor, self-care, and sensory processing skills; in turn, this is

supporting him with engaging in his therapy sessions and his environments at home and in school. I love my job and working with amazing families and fantastic children like Ben.”

Sensational Kids is Ireland’s leading non-profit provider of affordable and accessible early intervention services for children with additional needs in Ireland. Another child benefitting from the services of Sensational Kids in Clones is Eoin Stuart, a seven-year-old boy who attends weekly occupational therapy sessions to help develop skills that are necessary for school.

Mary Ward, an Occupational Therapist at Sensational Kids in Clones has been working with Eoin for the past few months: “The skills that we are helping Eoin develop for school include his fine motor skills, so holding his pencil and doing his buttons and zips. We also work with him to develop his concentration, organisation and social skills, so things like turn-taking, sharing and listening skills.

“Eoin has made wonderful progress since starting occupational therapy a couple of months ago and I can already see a significant difference in his own self confidence. I feel privileged working in this role; working

with children and their families making a real difference in their lives developing skills that are necessary for both home and in school.”

Marie Brennan is Head of Marketing and Business Development at Sensational Kids and comments: “As part of our social enterprise model, at Sensational Kids we reinvest all proceeds from the Play, Develop & Learn store back into the organisation. 2022 marks our fifteenth anniversary; since its formation, Sensational Kids has helped over 9,000 children and saved their families in excess of €2 million in therapy fees. We want to continue to grow so that we can continue to improve the lives of even more children like Ben and Eoin.”

Social enterprise is a growing and dynamic part of Irish social and economic life. Sensational Kids plans to build a National Child Development Centre in Kildare and has four centres in various locations around the country.

For more see www.sensationalkids.ie



Seven-year-old Eoin Stuart who has been attending occupational therapy at Sensational Kids pictured with Occupational Therapist Mary Ward in Clones.



Pictured is Ben O'Connor, aged 5 with Erin O'Hagan, an Occupational Therapist at Sensational Kids in Clones, a social enterprise providing essential front-line therapeutic supports to children of all abilities.