

Matt Talbot Community Trust - Newsletter, January/February 2021

A message from the Community

Welcome to our inaugural Newsletter and thanks for reading. This time of year can be difficult, and even more so when restrictions to stop interactions are in place. Indeed, going into hibernation might seem like an easy escape. Hibernation, however, can also mean loneliness, loss of purpose and an inability to exercise authorship and agency. At MTCT, we recognise this threat and made a double effort to make sure we brought this January to life. We transformed lethargy into energy, solitude into community, blues into humour and limitation into inspiration. All it took was some hard work and a little thinking outside the box.

- We pioneered our *January Kickstarter* programme with an impressive attendance rate and level of engagement
- We tripled our one-to one engagement with our participants
- We broadened accessibility to SMART recovery meetings and one-to-one sessions
- We enrolled participants into various online courses to continue their journey of upskilling and intellectual and social development

The MTCT prides itself on its ability to innovate for the betterment of our participants. January certainly tested that!

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- We pioneered our *January*



Donate Now!



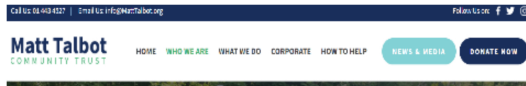
In conversation with Nealo

As always at the Matt Talbot, we are trying to think of new and innovative ways to engage our participants and – frankly – enjoy ourselves! In

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OUR NEW WEBSITE IS LIVE

With a few hiccups along the way, we have launched our new website, which you can visit at: www.mtct.ie. Take a look around and tell us what you would like to see improved!

Engaging in a virtual world

The challenges of the last year have not stopped us engaging our participants. All one to one meetings take place as normal. ***We have two Smart Recovery meetings by Zoom a week*** and have introduced a Thursday catch up with the entire group by Zoom where we arrange fun and engaging sessions - just to ensure that we all keep in touch.

We've enjoyed Kahoot Quizzes, games and even hosted a surprise 50th Birthday party. Engagement has increased week on week, with positive feedback.

participants and hearing from our participants. In January, we were fortunate enough to speak to **Nealo**, the Blanchardstown rapper, about his journey and the bumps along the way.

All listeners were thoroughly engaged, and the hour flew by. Have a listen to it [here](#).

We hope to build on such a great start and develop our initial conversation into an intriguing podcast, maybe learning something about sound production along the way. *There are rumours already circulating about a number of major stars being lined up.* Watch this space ...

Donate Now!

January Kickstarter Programme

The Kickstarter programme takes place once a week, with upbeat activities designed to motivate and entertain. The attendance and engagement have been overwhelmingly positive, and it is amazing to feel the energy being bounced around a zoom call as we have experienced. From sharing healthy recipes for green tea, to competitive quizzing and gaming, to hearing from inspirational people like rapper Nealo, we made huge strides in overcoming those January blues.

Activity Updates

- We continue to place a relentless focus on our participants, with the resilience building workshops attended by all participants.
- With less than five weeks to go, we have also started preparations for our

As outlined, after lots of hard work and effort, we have updated and relaunched our website, with lots of information about how we got to where we are today and where we want to go in the future. The last 24 months has been a challenge – just before COVID hit, a fire destroyed the centre in Ballyfermot. As we try to effect change on peoples' lives, returning home to the centre in Ballyfermot is our priority.

We are making progress in securing the funds to rebuild and regenerate the centre so that we can serve our participants as effectively as possible in the future. In the meantime, we would welcome any support any of our friends and partners can provide. Whether it is following us on twitter, Instagram or Facebook, providing ideas or support on how we might continue to learn the ropes of our new virtual world, volunteering or hitting the donate button below, we welcome all engagement from our supporters.

International Women's day project, but more on that next month...

- As always, thanks to the great team at MT and the efforts of our participants over the past month.



Rialtas na
hÉireann
Government
of Ireland



 The Community
Foundation for Ireland

The impact of grants

In January, we received two crucial pieces of funding, from CDETB, Comic Relief and the learner's assistance fund. Thanks to all funders, with the grants allowing us to set up our **Digital Lending Library** and continue professional development. The **Digital Lending Library** enables us to loan laptops and mobile broadband to most of our participants, a central aspect of virtual engagement and ensuring they can continue with their education, access their supports and continue to participate in all MTCT activity. We were delighted that **in January eight participants started eight new QQI awarded programmes** and one other programme, all online.