

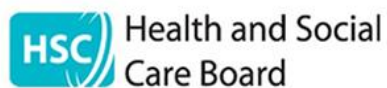


## ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017

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Altram is registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC103690.

## Chairperson's Foreword

On behalf of Altram trustees and staff, I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 2016-2017. It demonstrates the range and quality of Altram's activities and provides evidence of another successful year for Altram with a diverse programme of service delivery and support offered by the organisation to its membership.

This has been a period of consolidation and growth for Altram, arising largely from confirmed funding from the Department of Education (DE) for a three-year period (2016-2019). This funding has facilitated the organisation to plan effectively and develop their services.

Throughout the year, Altram staff has delivered a wide range of specialist support services. These have included: helping settings meet their statutory and regulatory obligations; providing support for language and immersion methodology; supporting committees in Irish-medium early years settings along with the provision of support for parents in their interaction with their children.

Altram staff and trustees have offered a strong voice for the sector, representing it across key stakeholder groups such as the Department of Education, the Health and Social Care Board and SureStart. They have also played a role in a continuing partnership with Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.

Altram continued to produce resources during 2016-2017. This has included Ceol Leat! - a publication of songs and rhymes in Irish for young children which has been effective in supporting parents in helping their children develop and consolidate relevant vocabulary and language skills. Ceol Leat! proved so popular that it required a second print run, meaning 2,000 copies were printed.

I would like to congratulate Altram staff, our membership and my colleagues on the Altram Board for their continued commitment and dedication.

Altram looks forward to 2017-18 and remains strongly committed to improving the quality and standards of education and the outcomes for children in Irish-medium Early Years

Áine Andrews

Chairperson



## Mission Statement and Aims

Altram's mission is:

To promote high quality early years childcare through the medium of Irish and to support family involvement as a keystone in the development of an Irish language community

Altram is a regional organisation which welcomes everyone regardless of their background or way of life.

Altram was established in 1990 by a group of community-based Irish language projects to achieve the following aims to:

- Offer support, training and advice to the growing Irish language early years provision, including parents and committees
- Contribute to the development of an Irish language community in which Irish is valued and spoken
- Develop quality Irish-medium early years provision as a foundation for this community
- Develop quality early years provision as an effective basis for an immersion programme
- Encourage and support the participation of parents in the development of an Irish language community
- Encourage and support the participation of parents in their children's education
- Make Irish accessible to all in the wider community
- Promote the importance of Irish-medium early years provision





## Work Programme 2016-2017

This was a busy, productive and constructive time for Altram. During this period, the organisation remained in receipt of core funding from the Department of Education. This was further enhanced by funding from the Health and Social Services Board, Childcare Partnerships and voluntary trusts. This allowed the organisation to

forward plan and consolidate the services it provided.

Altram's work included:

- Early years support services
- Training
- Parental support
- Resource development
- Management support
- Website
- Advocacy



## Early years support services

The early years team promotes high quality provision and high-level outcomes for children in Irish-medium early years settings by:

- Delivering early years specialist support and advice in Irish-medium early years settings
- Advising on immersion education
- Providing early years advice to support the raising of quality standards - to ensure minimum quality standards are met and improved upon within the Irish-medium early years sector
- Providing early years training and networking opportunities for staff in Irish-medium early years groups in an area, including specific cluster days and in-service training
- Providing child protection and designated officer training in conjunction with the Trust and Volunteer Now
- Encouraging Irish language early years groups to interact with SureStart in their areas, including the Programme for Two Year Olds (P2YO)
- Supporting emerging new Irish-medium early years settings
- Engaging with different services e.g. dental health, speech therapy, health visitors
- Identifying training needs and directing naíscoileanna to relevant agencies

As well as one early years specialist based in Derry and two early years specialists based in Belfast, there is an Irish-medium early years programme support specialist who works specifically with the Programme for Two Year Olds, in particular with SureStart groups.

Throughout the reporting period, Altram EYS staff carried out advice and support visits to early years settings across the region – from statutory naíscoileanna to voluntary Irish-medium early years settings with voluntary committees.



## Training

### Cluster training (cnuasoiliúint)

Through the cluster training programme, early years staff provide training in relation to: the language immersion preschool curriculum; regulatory and statutory obligations; curriculum planning and delivery; language immersion methodology; the development of self-improvement and action planning; assessing children's progress; care, play and parental involvement to practitioners



in Irish-medium early years settings throughout the north of Ireland.

Throughout the period of the report, Altram delivered six training days a year in a range of relevant areas including:

- Immersion methodology
- Managing challenging behaviour
- Planning
- Good practice
- Funding
- Parental engagement
- Evaluation

Altram also delivered one child protection session a year in County Derry and one designated officer training session a year in Belfast

## Conferences

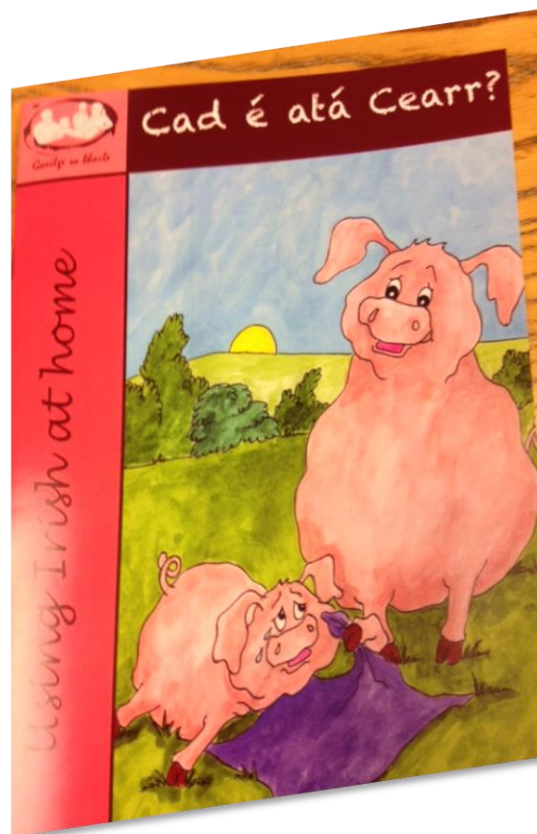
Through its conference programme, Altram creates a space for dialogue and networking and works to improve quality within settings. Altram delivered a conference in May 2016 in the Glenavon Hotel in Cookstown (Na hEalaíona: Dea-chleachtais/*The Arts: Good Practice*).

## Parental support

An important part of Altram's role is to provide support to parents of children attending Irish-medium settings. As well as making resources available for parents and offering advice, Altram runs events for parents. During the period of the report, Altram delivered two parents'

workshops – in Derry and Dungiven – providing parents with children in Irish-medium education with support, advice and guidance on immersion and Irish-medium provision.

Altram continues to make the resource *Using Irish at Home* available to parents.





## Resource development

During this period, Altram developed a major resource – a book of songs and rhymes for young children – Ceol Leat!. Research continually shows that rhymes can make children more aware of language patterns, help them to build language skills and improve their word

store, build confidence and creativity. It was with this in mind that Altram decided to produce a quality resource which would celebrate this art form and provide an important resource for parents, practitioners and young children.



Ceol Leat! was written by Donegal author Róise Ní Bhaoill, enhancing the resource with rich Ulster Irish. It was illustrated by Derry/Singapore based artist Trisha Deery. Two cds accompanied the publication, with the songs sung by Belfast musician Gráinne Holland. Gráinne's interpretation of the songs was lively and animated. Altram published 1,000 copies of this resource which quickly sold out. A further

1,000 copies were published which are available in Irish language shops and through Altram.

The publication was launched in Belfast, Derry and Newry, allowing Altram's membership access to the launch of this valuable resource. Launches were lively, with a lot of young children and their parents present as well as practitioners.

## State of the Sector

During 2016-2017, Altram carried out a major review of the Irish-medium early years sector. The aim of this research was to develop a report to reflect the current state of the Irish-medium early years sector. This included:

- Reviewing the impact of the Irish-medium early years sector
- Identifying pressures and challenges which the sector is facing
- Assessing the sustainability of the sector – at present and in the future
- Identifying support needs within the sector



The process to develop this report involved an in-depth consultation with the sector:

### Focus Groups

- Parents
- Altram EYS team and regional capacity officer
- Two focus groups with practitioners at the cnuasoiliúint
- Altram board and manager

### Structured Interviews

- Health and Social Care Board/Childcare Partnership
- Department of Education
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

### Telephone Interviews

- Health and Social Care Trust Early Years Managers

### Questionnaires

Sent to all practitioners and management committees.

This report identified a remarkable 58% growth in the provision of early years services through the medium of Irish from over 760 attending services in 2012 to nearly 1,200 in 2017. The report developed nine strategic recommendations which Altram is currently implementing.

## Two Windows on the World

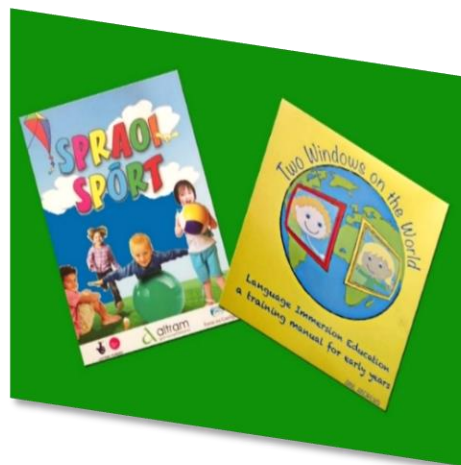
### Language Immersion Education: a training manual for early years

2016 also saw the re-publication of Two Windows on the World by Áine Andrews.

This valuable resource aims to support practitioners in early years language immersion settings, particularly those at preschool level. The resource was developed to address the gap in specific accredited immersion methodology and pedagogy and to provide an effective basis for initial training and continuing professional development. The manual provides comprehensive information and guidance as well as a range of reflective and practical activities.

All settings were provided with two copies of the resource at workshops in Belfast

and Derry to introduce Two Windows to practitioners and to provide some training in using the resource.



### Spraoi Spórt

During the reporting period, Altram purchased equipment for the Programme for Two Year Olds to allow groups working with two-year olds to implement the Spraoi Spórt programme. Spraoi Spórt is a programme of activities designed to

promote physical play and movement. It is fun based and incorporates songs and games. This resource promotes and improves skills such as teamwork; listening, concentration and memory skills as well as gross motor skills and flexibility.

### Cá bhfuil Lúlú?

To address a lack of Irish-medium early years resources in the Programme for Two Year Olds (P2YO), Altram developed a tailored A3 resource targeted at children in Irish-medium settings on the P2YO, in particular Irish-medium Sure Start settings. This was illustrated by Trisha Deery. It is a simple tale of children in a nursery setting looking for a member of

the group - Lúlú. The resource was launched with a workshop in each Irish-medium early years SureStart setting. Each of these groups was given an accompanying song book and a percussion instrument for each child to encourage them to participate in the music.





## Management support

In 1997, Altram developed a resource to support management committees in Irish-medium settings to oversee and guide the work of naíscoileanna. This was updated during 2016-2017, taking into account relevant documentation such as the publication of the Childminding and Daycare for Children Under Age 12 Minimum Standards and the accompanying Implementation Guidance issued by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety; the Inspection and Self Evaluation Framework issued by

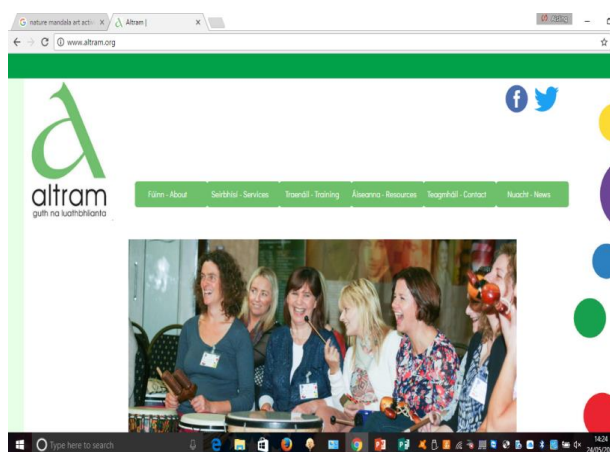
the Education and Training Inspectorate and the Curricular Guidance for Pre-School Education issued by CCEA.

During this period, there has also been some shift to statutory status for Irish-medium early years settings, with a different structure of governance than that for community or voluntary settings, bringing a different set of issues. However, fundamental guidance remains very relevant, particularly in relation to the promotion of an appropriate understanding of pedagogy, curriculum and quality standards.

## Web site

During the reporting period, with funding from the Big Lottery, Altram developed a new web site at: [www.altram.org](http://www.altram.org). Altram worked with AVEC Solutions – a not for profit social enterprise based in east Belfast - to develop the new site. The site is proving to be an important resource for Altram members and includes online

access to resources. There is a link through to Altram's social media platforms – Facebook and Twitter. The site is being well used, with up to 160 users per week. As the site develops, it is hoped to include a YouTube channel and other resources.



## Advocacy

Altram seeks to influence the strategic development of Irish-medium pre-school education through responding to relevant consultations and sectoral representation at relevant bodies. During the reporting period, this has included:

- The Pre School Advisory Group (Western, South Eastern, Belfast) (now a regional body)
- Early Years Inclusion Service
- Childcare Partnerships (South Eastern, Belfast; Western)
- Childcare Partnership training sub group
- Western Childcare Partnership Quality Assurance Group

- Western Childcare Partnership Strategic Funding Panel
- HSCT Workforce Development Group
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
- Early Intervention Professional Development Knowledge and Skills Framework
- Bright Start funding panel

Altram also responded to relevant consultations including the consultation on the draft Programme for Government 2016-2021.

The State of the Sector report also helped Altram achieve its advocacy role through carrying out major sectoral research.



## Financial Review

Lynne, Drake and Company Ltd prepared unaudited financial statements for 2016-2017 in line with the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015).

### Statement of Financial Position At 31 March 2017

	31.3.17 £	31.3.16 £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>		
Tangible assets	451	571
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Debtors	2,888	19,665
Cash at bank	<u>73,732</u>	<u>45,169</u>
	76,620	64,834
<b>CREDITORS</b>		
Amounts falling due within one year	(3,977)	(1,679)
	—————	—————
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<u>72,643</u>	<u>63,155</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<u>73,094</u>	<u>63,726</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<u>73,094</u>	<u>63,726</u>
<b>FUNDS</b>		
Unrestricted funds	46,322	43,962
Restricted funds	<u>26,772</u>	<u>19,764</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>73,094</u>	<u>63,726</u>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 12 September 2017 and were signed on its behalf by:

Áine Andrews (Chairperson) - Trustee

Theresa Brady (Treasurer) – Trustee

## Structure, Governance and Management

Altram is a charity registered with the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland.

Trustees are appointed or reappointed annually at the Annual General Meeting.

All Trustees gave their time voluntarily and received no remuneration or other benefits.

### TRUSTEES

Áine Andrews, Chairperson

Theresa Brady, Treasurer

Maureen Murray, Trustee

Sue Pentel, Trustee

The Manager acts as Secretary to the Trustees.

Altram complies with regional child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures and has its own policy in place. It observes regional vetting guidance and all staff are compliant with regulations.

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### Staff

Heather Floyd, Manager (Belfast office)

Danny Cassidy, Regional Capacity Officer (Derry office)

Aisling Walls, Early Years Specialist (Belfast office)

Bridgeen McGlinchey, Early Years Specialist (Derry office)

Cáitlín Ní Chonluain, Early Years Specialist (Belfast office)

Wendy Finn, Regional Irish-medium Early Years Programme Support Specialist (Belfast office)

Nic Sadlier, Administrator (Belfast office)

### Staff changes during 2016-2017

Róise Ní Bhaoill was employed as Manager during 2016. She left the organisation in June 2016.

Éadaoin Ní Mhaoilriain was employed as Administrator from October 2016 to March 2017.



## Sponsors and Acknowledgments

Altram would like to thank its funders without whom any of the above work would have been possible:

- Department of Education
- Health and Social Care Board
- Childcare Partnerships
- Big Lottery

