



# Noreen's Kids

Supporting the work of FCP in Romania



***Christmas Newsletter from Romania 2021***  
***Crăciun fericit și an nou prosper***  
***Happy Christmas to all our wonderful supporters***

Time to wish all our supporters and those who have helped with the charity a very happy Christmas.

It seems no time at all since we were last writing the newsletter and yet this has been a year like no other since the charity was founded.

As if the effects of the pandemic were not enough, we have also had to cope with major upheavals due to the refurbishment of the building in which we have been based since the charity was started. It is owned by the Romanian equivalent of children's social services – "Child Protection", who got a grant from EU to fund the improvements.

It culminated in us being told that we must move out to allow for the renovations to continue. Unfortunately, we had very little notice of the move and at first it was not at all clear where we could move to. Eventually we were offered space in what was an old orphanage building in a nearby village – Slobozia Noua (New Slobozia). The building had been abandoned for 15 years and the rooms we were allocated were not really habitable without complete refurbishment.



At first we were offered just 5 rooms on the first floor and to make matters worse it later transpired that there were conditions attached to the grant for the building, where we have been for all these years, which mean that we will not be allowed to move back – it seems that it is EU policy to encourage the closure of residential facilities for children, they envisage the children being looked after in the community.



Outside the new building

Community care is of course impossible for the children we care for, who are all severely disabled.

We had very little alternative but to try to improve the unit in Slobozia Noua and George our chief nurse, our accountant Sergiu and our driver Nicu set about making the building more usable. The building was not in a state where it could be occupied by our children and young adults.

We were eventually given another room but there is nowhere for an office and above all there were no adequate toilet or washing facilities let alone anywhere for the vital washing machines, so we had to convert one of the rooms for this.

The fact that the rooms are upstairs, and that there is no lift means that anything we do with these rooms will only be a temporary solution. At the moment children have to be carried downstairs and as well as the stairs to the ground floor most of the rooms also have stairs to access them.



Currently the ground-floor rooms are being used as a storage facility for other departments. We hope that eventually we may have the use of at least some of this space.

Once again, we owe a lot to the staff who worked on through some very challenging conditions.

George, Sergiu and Nicu set about the work to refurbish the building.



George decorating!

*Sergiu connects the drains* They put in extra shower and toilet facilities, added a kitchen and connected up the drains.

They completely redecorated the rooms and have also done work to improve the roofing so that it is more insulated against the extremes of temperature that have been something of a feature this year, it was incredibly hot through the Summer – sometimes over 40° C and we are expecting the usual very cold Romanian winter.



The picture on the left shows the passage they have worked on to improve the insulation – before and after; and on the right the the washroom and laundry that has been created.



The extra room is now used by Adrian so that he can be in a separate room from the adult girls.

During this winter, the children and young adults have mostly had to remain in their rooms – there is no space for a communal play room. As well as lack of room for us to entertain the children, it is also very difficult to get the children out in their wheelchairs because of the complete lack of disabled access.

### **Temporary accommodation**

This accommodation is meant to be temporary until the renovation work in Slobozia is completed, probably in spring 2022. As already mentioned, under the EU grant agreement our previous home must not be used for residential purposes, which means that our children cannot return there.

Our situation will be reviewed in the Spring. We hope our children may be offered a more suitable building with access to outdoor space.

### **Community Programmes**

At the moment we are unable to offer continuity of care to our community families because of a lack of storage space for supplies and because we have no base from which the community team can operate. In addition to this, some of the villages were completely closed during the worst of the Covid – restrictions were absolutely draconian with the army enforcing the rules during a period of martial rule.

We are also short of staff and it is difficult to recruit because of uncertainties about the future of the charity. Above all we need a social worker for the community project, without whom it is impossible to support our families and advocate for their rights. Many of our community families are impoverished and caring for a sick child or adult often without the financial benefits to which they are entitled.

However, despite these difficulties, thanks to your generosity, we are still arranging to deliver firewood to those families most in need. They have no other form of heating in their homes nor any other means to cook their food. Many families live in very poor housing conditions where all the family live and sleep in one room.

We have been very grateful for funding to help with the purchase of a converted Euro container which was intended for the garden in the former unit. Many thanks to the Toy Trust UK, International Rotary Club and LDS Charities, Romania, who helped make this possible. Because of the move to Slobozia Noua it has been installed in the yard there and has been invaluable in storing supplies for our children. The container is absolutely full now, but sadly there is not enough room to store much of the community equipment, and this has had to be stored outside under plastic sheeting.



The container arrives! Installing the Euro container



Nicu inside the new container



## Our residential Children and Young Adults



### David

Perhaps the child least affected by the restrictions and the re-location to Slobozia Noua.

He is such an adorable little boy - happily occupies himself even when he is alone in his cot. Because of the deterioration in his spine he is most comfortable lying down being entertained either by one of the children or a member of staff. He is so determined to watch everything that goes on around him, he pulls himself up in his cot with the support of his elbows and lower arms and manages one or two steps before sitting down and then does it again until he gets tired and has a rest! He lets everyone know when he wants to be taken out of his cot! He just loved being outdoors during the good weather.

### Juliana

Juliana has had a tough year with many admissions to hospital. She had 4 operations with long stays in hospital. Eventually she was discharged and returned to our care. Because of Covid restrictions she never saw a familiar face whilst she was in hospital and at first she was very withdrawn. When she first came back she had to isolate for two weeks in an unfamiliar bedroom with just one carer to support her. Despite this, once back in the room she shared with Doina being entertained by Cristina and the staff, she soon returned to her way of doing things. Her operations were successful and she is much more comfortable. She is as feisty as ever and is able to stand in her cot and manoeuvre it - often next to David, where they entertain each other! She likes to be outdoors and insisted on being one of the first children to be carried down to the garden. She has now gained some weight but has not yet caught up. The good news is that while in hospital she was retested, and definitely **does not** have Cystic Fibrosis as we had been told.



### Doina



Poor Doina has been badly affected by the move and the pandemic. She has complex needs and the changes have completely overwhelmed her. She is very withdrawn with a tendency to serious self-harm. She was better in Slobozia when she was free to go outdoors on most days. A twenty minute walk in the local park would help to calm her down and there was direct access to the garden. During this summer, all the staff and myself worked with her, gradually increasing the time outdoors. She

was often upset by the limitations in outdoor space and sometimes wanted to return to her bed. Although she was more settled by the end of summer, she still tends to self-harm. In cold weather the only place the staff can take her walking is in the short corridor. Because of the limited space, all four of the younger children share a room – where in the past there were only two.

### Christina

What can we say about our dear Cristina! Well Christina is Christina! The same loving and endearing child who we have cared for since she was three but was more like a nine month old. Although she grew physically her mental ability did not keep pace. She does not understand that she cannot continue to demand exclusive attention. She has never had to compete with other children with the same physical ability as herself, most of the children living with us cannot experience the joys of a fully mobile life - they are either wheelchair dependent or bed ridden. She is very happy when she has the individual attention of our staff as long as they don't include any other child!



We think she might be better off in the company of children of her own age and ability.

### Monica

Monica continues to enjoy good health, thank God. She was heart-broken when she had to leave Slobozia, but was reassured once she realized that our staff had also moved with her. When she first moved to Slobozia Noua she was given the bedroom nearest to the toilet because she often needs access to a toilet quickly. Ideally Monica likes to be able to see activity around her even when she is watching TV in her room. In Slobozia she had her own sitting/dining room where she loved having one or two of the small children join her. Sadly we had to move Monica from her more central room when we were allocated an extra room, because Adrian (who is 23 years old) needed to have a single room. Her present room is more isolated and has steps into and out of it but she is happy enough now she is more used to it. As the present accommodation is only temporary, we hope, God willing, to resolve some of these issues next year.



### Claudia



Our lovely Claudia is the same happy little person - always delighted to see another smiling face whether it is a child or an adult. She is sharing a room with Andana as they did when they first came to us. She has had a reasonably healthy year without any admission to hospital, thank Heavens. She loved going out during the summer although it was very difficult to take her, in her wheelchair, down two flights of stairs. She could only be taken outside when there was a work man on duty who was able to help the staff carry her. It is also rather dangerous with the number of steps

they have to negotiate.

### Andana

Sadly, Andana has been completely confined to bed except when she is lifted onto the shower trolley for her shower. There was no possibility to take her outside this summer - so different from her summers in Slobozia where she enjoyed nothing more than to be wheeled around the garden with one of the little children sharing her special trolley. She loved watching the children and staff playing and including her in their games.

Physically she has been well and her appetite is good although she does need to have her food liquidized.



## Adrian



Adrian has his own bed room now. He is very happy because we were able to put his bed in such a position that he can see our staff every time they pass up or down the corridor. The staff often take one or two of the smaller children into his room so that they can watch cartoons on the TV with him. Monica sometimes also joins him to watch TV. Adrian has always been a magnet, drawing people to his room and he loves their

company- as far as this goes nothing has changed for him in his new room, but he has had some problems with his physical health this year.

The local hospital, despite Covid restrictions, managed some tests and found he has gall stones - he had a recurrence 3 weeks ago. He has a special diet, which has helped. He has gained some weight and looks much better than he did.

His sister who works in Spain regularly comes to see him when she is able to have a few days off work. So sad that she is the only relative who visits him.

## Our Supporters

We wanted to say a very big thank you to all who have supported us through this difficult year - both those who contribute regularly but also those who have sent donations because they knew that fund raising is difficult in Covid times when the one-off events which normally raise about half our income have mostly not been possible.

Without your generous support we could not possibly have managed.

Let's hope for a better new year, in the meanwhile wishing you and your families every blessing and a very special Christmas time together.

## Contact Details for Noreen's Kids

Dr Robin Dunn

147 Priory Road

Hungerford

Berks. RG17 0AP

Email: [robin@noreenskids.org](mailto:robin@noreenskids.org)

Website: <http://www.noreenskids.org>

Donations:

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