



*Noreen's Kids*

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Dear Supporter

As you will know from the last newsletter, Noreen's residential children have been looked after for the last two and a half years in a village outside Slobozia itself – Slobozia Noua.

Just to fill in some of the background - we were originally told with very little notice that we must move out of the building in Slobozia, which was to be refurbished with money from an EU grant.

Eventually we were offered space in a large building which had once been an orphanage, belonging to the village council. It had been empty for many years.

Although this was not in a fit state to use at first, our staff did wonders redecorating rewiring and generally improving the rooms we were allowed to use – we also installed new toilets and a wet room so while it was not perfect the unit was usable.

Other projects were also moved there from the original site, particularly a project which houses homeless people.

They are in a quite separate unit from us but within the same building and from our point of view this arrangement was not a problem.

Unfortunately though, when we tried to renew our license to operate, we were told that this could not be granted because we had adults in the same building as our children –there had been a change in the law.

However Slobozia's head of the children's social services – Director Marku - said that he was quite happy for us to continue to look after our children, until the homeless people moved back into the refurbished unit in Slobozia.

We discovered that we ourselves were not going to be allowed to move back because one of the conditions for the EU grant was that the building should not be used for residential children.

Unfortunately the refurbishment project has been very much delayed and is currently nearly two years over its original projected finish date .

In July this year there was a national scandal concerning the treatment of the elderly and the government ordered a snap inspection of every care facility in the country.

We were inspected along with everyone else and were told that our residential care must close immediately, because we didn't have an official license – in fact we were inspected on a Friday and told we must have the children out by Monday! They did not in any way criticise the actual care of the children.

Director Marku who has always been very supportive was horrified and told us to stay put and he would fix things. However, in the end he could not do so and with a very heavy heart we have had to move the children into government care facilities.

Our lovely care staff went as “volunteers” to help the children settle into their new homes, and for the present our “children” are doing reasonably well. The facilities caring for them are very much improved from the sort of government institution of a few years ago, but they are still somewhat crowded and short of staff.

Nothing of course could replace the absolute love and commitment which Noreen provided.

Anna and I, representing the trustees of Noreen's Kids, have been three times this year to Romania and have tried to support Noreen and the staff in this very difficult time.

Noreen has decided that she will not be able to stay in Romania through their very cold winter, so will be coming back to the UK during the winter months.

The senior Romanian staff – George Bala our chief nurse and Sergiu David the administrator, will take over the running of the Romanian charity FCP which Noreen's Kids grant aids. They have worked with Noreen for over 20 years and will continue to deliver her special type of care to a very vulnerable population of children, and young adults, living in the community. The trustees of Noreen's Kids, Noreen, Anna and I will continue to support, advise and check that our money is getting best value. We propose to build up the community element of the work of the charity. Something that has always been an important element of the work we do.

During COVID it was not always possible to stay in touch with families living at home and caring for sick children and young adults in their own homes sometimes in conditions of abject poverty.

Given what has happened it seems an opportunity to expand the work in the community and over the last few weeks we have been reestablishing contact with our community families, to reassess their needs. There are at least 500 families “on our books”, families who know they can come to us if they need help.

Most of these families are looking after disabled children in their own homes. There is still virtually no community care from official sources in Romania and we are there for them to provide appropriate help. We aim to provide nursing care where this is needed, extra food, help with transport, sometimes help to improve their houses – roofing, new windows and sometimes even new walls. We provide some medical equipment, beds, wheelchairs walking frames etc.

We are sometimes involved in end-of-life care for young adults often with young families.

During the winter we deliver extra firewood to families who are not able to afford sufficient wood to keep warm and cook during the winter. Traditional heating and cooking in the villages depends on wood fired stoves.

Above all we are advocates for these families helping to raise the voice of these often-forgotten people.

All of this has always been part of the work of the charity, but Noreen and the trustees agree that we now have an opportunity to expand this work.

Because this is a significant change in how we deliver care to poor and sick children in this part of Romania we felt we should explain the reasons for the change.

We are so grateful for the support we have received without which we could not continue this vital work.

With kind regards

Noreen O’Gorman and the trustees - Robin Dunn, Pat Mann, Sue Smith and Anita Campbell