

PRESIDENT HIGGINS VISITS OBERSTOWN TO PRESENT GAISCE AWARDS

Friday, 25th May – President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins has presented four young people in Oberstown Children Detention Campus with Gaisce awards at a special ceremony in the campus today. President Higgins met with young people, staff and management, and presented four young people each with a Bronze Gaisce award.

It is the first visit by the President of Ireland to Oberstown since it became a single campus in June 2016, and the first ever time a President has presented Gaisce awards to young people in Oberstown. To mark the historic visit, a number of young people presented President Higgins with a portrait of the President they had painted in recent weeks.

The four recipients successfully completed their Gaisce challenges over the past 12 months in each of the four categories of community involvement, personal skill, physical recreation and adventure journey, earning valuable and practical life skills that they will carry with them when they leave Oberstown.

The activities the young people have engaged in include:

- Raising funds for local charities through on-site fun runs, and participation in the Oberstown Meals on Wheels programme, which serves members of the local community from the campus kitchens.
- The Street Doctors programme – a first aid course tailored to the lives of young people in Oberstown which addresses situations they may potentially encounter in their communities.
- Participation in the Oberstown Campus Council – a forum of young people, staff and management which allows young people to have their voice heard and to contribute to decision making on campus. This in line with Oberstown's commitment in its three-year strategy to ensure the views of young people are taken into account at all levels
- Football coaching, digital music production, and cooking and baking skills
- Activities in Carlingford adventure centre

Chair of the Board of Oberstown, Professor Ursula Kilkelly said: "We are proud of the young people who are receiving awards today and the staff who guided them on their journey. They have demonstrated that despite their detention, young people in Oberstown can contribute to the wider community by availing of the opportunities on offer, through programmes such as Gaisce, for example, raising funds for local charities and supporting the local Meals on Wheels programme.

"We are very grateful to President Higgins for taking the time to come to the campus and present the awards. For these young people, receiving these awards from the President will be a positive memory they will cherish into their adult lives."

Director of Oberstown Pat Bergin commented: "These awards are a real testament to each of the four young people receiving them in the campus today. They are role models for what many young people who have come from chaotic and difficult backgrounds can achieve when provided with a safe and secure environment and the supports to flourish. It's a reflection of our commitment in Oberstown to helping young people to address their reoffending behaviour through learning and development, and to hopefully go on to return to their communities and make a positive contribution."

ENDS

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Note to Editors:

A full list of the activities completed by the four Gaisce recipients is here:

Community involvement

- Young people have raised money for charities in the community through on-site charity runs, and have also contributed to an Oberstown-operated Meals on Wheels programme for the local community, through cooking and working in the kitchens on campus
- Participation in the new Campus Council – which allows young people to have voice heard and contribute to decision making on campus – in line with Oberstown’s commitment in our strategy to ensuring the views of young people are taken into account at all levels.

Personal skills

- The Street Doctors programme – a first aid course tailored to the lives of high-risk young people by giving them the skills they need to deliver life-saving first aid, addressing situations they may potentially encounter in their communities, e.g. violent assault injuries such as stab wounds or gun-shot wounds
- The Decider Programme – a programme that assists young people to make better decisions for their mental health and wellbeing
- Football coaching – learning coaching skills and techniques
- Baking and cooking
- Digital music production
- Learning new activity – snooker

Physical recreation

- Fitness development

Adventure journey

- Some young people attended Carlingford adventure centre

1. Oberstown

Oberstown Children Detention Campus provides a safe and secure environment for children who are placed in the campus by the Children. The objective of Oberstown is to provide children in the campus with education and development in order to address and change offending behaviour, so that they can return and contribute positively to their families and communities.

In June 2016 a single Oberstown campus was established, bringing together three children detention schools – Trinity House, Oberstown Boys’ School and Oberstown Girls’ School.

2. CEHOP

Oberstown helps young people to address their offending behaviour through a programme centred on their care, education and health needs.

Upon arrival each young person is assessed and an individual care plan is developed by a multi-disciplinary team. This produces a bespoke journey through care plan for each young person. This is achieved through a unique care model, developed by Oberstown, in which relationship building is key:

- **C** – care, we give these young people a routine that for almost all has been entirely absent – bed, food, responsibility.
- **E** – education, there is a full education programme at Oberstown. Junior and Leaving Certificate cycles are covered and a summer school ensures continuous learning.
- **H** - health and well-being, from on-site nurses through full medical care, dentist and psychological care.
- **O**ffending behaviour - each young person attends modules designed to achieve understanding of their behavior and reactions
- **P**reparation - for return to families and communities Looking towards reintegration, we work in partnership with both Le Chéile and YAP who provide family and community support structures after release.